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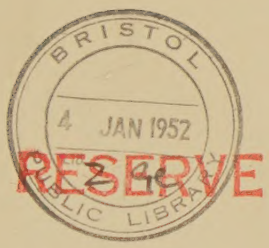

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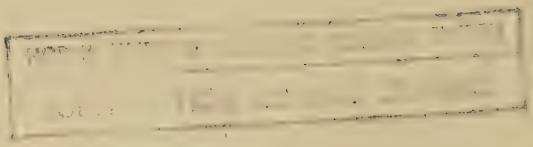

SINGERMANN

ONE: THE BRIS

And so it was decided that the child should be called Michael, after Rebecca's father. Naming a newborn in the Singermann family was not a particularly momentous procedure by this time. Moses and Rebecca had brought five sons into the world before Michael came. There was also a daughter, Rachel.

The important thing was to make a brilliant success of the *Bris,* the festival of circumcision. Each of Michael's older brothers had been given a notable *Bris,* though there had been an accident over Joseph, the oldest, from which it had taken him years to recover. In later years, Moses recalled that the rabbi officiating at Joseph's *Bris* had been drunk and had used a rusty blade. But this unfortunate aspect of the ceremony had not occurred to Moses at the time, for he, too, had been slightly under the influence of strong red wine.

Joseph was now twenty years of age and had been born in Roumania. Michael, ten days old and ready for the rabbi's knife, was born in Silver Bow, which is the largest city in Montana. Since she had been married at eighteen, Rebecca Singermann was scarcely through one *Bris* before her husband was making plans for another. Between Joseph and Michael, there were four sons and one daughter. Next to Joseph came Rachel, and, of course, there had been no *Bris* for her. Girls are born inauspiciously into Jewish families. Rachel had always helped to bake cakes and clean silverware for the festivals of her younger brothers. She had never looked upon the actual ceremony when the rabbi

chanted his prayer and then used the sharp-gleaming blade. She was made ill by the sight of the infant's soft undergarments stained with blood. How cruel! Rachel used to think. How glad I am that I was born a girl!

Louis was one year younger than Rachel, and they called him the picture boy because of his ambition to be an artist. Corot painted the lofty skies, old farms and soft, serene meadows. Louis knew of El Greco who emigrated to Spain and grew exalted thinking of Christ and Calvary. Some day, thought Louis, I will paint pictures. I will paint Moses with his angry black beard and Rachel with the two cherry points on her cheeks. I will paint all my dreams.

Louis was a clerk in his father's store, but the work was intensely displeasing to him except for the times when he painted show cards and trimmed windows. He possessed a feeling for outline and color, the dazzle of the spectrum, the still music of a great canvas. This feeling possessed every nerve of his body, causing him an anguish of exaltation and frequently acute depression.

After Louis was David, and of all the Singermann boys he was most beautiful to the eye. David was not so talkative as Louis, but whatever he said was sweet to most ears. It was really delightful listening to David, but it was only after he had spoken that you realized he had said almost nothing. It was because of his happy disposition, his care-free manner, and his good looks that you thought David was saying something important. Looking at him while at the *Bris* of his newest brother, you could not connect him with any mood or action that did not partake of delight. The words fall softly from his full red lips and laughter causes his eyes to shine with a deeper splendor.

Sol and Harry Singermann stood in one corner of the large living room eating rich cakes and drinking heady gulps of wine. Although Sol was only one year older than Harry, he was much larger and stronger in his body. Sol

was the only fair Singermann. At this time of his life he had brown hair that still retained the golden glints of his babyhood. His eyes were a clear golden brown. Sol was perfectly capable of thrashing anyone near his size. For his age, he possessed heavy shoulders and large, broad hands. He looked as if he would be the shortest of the Singermanns and that all his strength would lie in the muscles of his bulging shoulders. Moses had shoulders like that.

Harry, in contrast to Sol, was slight and rather anemic. Rebecca had experienced more trouble with him than with any of her children. From the first day of his life he had been the ailing one. None of the other children had been pestered by measles or sore throat, yet Harry had succumbed to them as though he had been a *Goy*. Now, he was afflicted with tonsillitis, a sickness that kept him home from Webster School for days at a time. There was hardly any getting along with Harry, he had so many sore throats, and they came so close together.

Yet there was little doubt that Harry possessed the quickest wits in the family. He was the brightest in his school work and jumped from one grade to the next with astonishing rapidity. Already, he had passed Sol who was slow and dull at his studies. Harry's studiousness did not make for good feeling between himself and Sol. They were constantly quarreling; and when they came to blows, Sol had little trouble in vanquishing his younger brother. But he trembled before Harry's sharp and bitter taunts.

Moses Singermann saw Harry as his most intelligent child and Sol as his most stupid. Joseph was the most energetic, a tireless worker, the most satisfactory son in the store even though he quarreled frequently with his father. The oldest son was a slight and wiry youth, and no one ever thought of him as handsome. Because he had lived longer with Joseph and knew him better, his ways and expressions, Moses felt closer to him than to any of his other children.

Rachel was a girl and therefore of less practical importance to Moses. Still, since she was a girl of pleasing appearance, her father allowed her to do much as she wanted—although he warned her not to wait too long in getting a husband. The biggest sin of all in an orthodox Jewish family is for a girl to wait too long. Rachel had been going with Sam Straller for two years; and if she liked Sam wasn't it about time she made up her mind to marry him? Sam was employed on the machines in a newspaper office and earned very little money; but Moses was willing to take him into the business just as soon as he and Rachel came to an understanding.

"I never heard from such a slow love-making as in America," grumbled Moses. "In the Old Country, a young man he goes to the girl's father. *Mi schmeest,* and you drink a glass from good wine. And a marriage it is arranged."

The Singermann house was one of the most unusual structures in Silver Bow. All the rooms were on one floor, one leading into the other in a swift, unexpected fashion so that visitors were confused in finding their way from front to rear. The street door opened directly into the living room —the Singermanns called it "sitting room"—with its great chandelier of tinkling crystals, a musical confusion of delicate colors. Strangely enough, there was the kitchen just beyond the sitting room. There was a large cook stove in the kitchen, and on the oven door was engraved a ship that sailed perpetually towards the long bologna-shaped hot water tank to one side. There was no central heating in the Singermann house. In those days, central heating was considered the height of luxury and not quite proper. The Singermanns looked doubtfully upon those neighbors who had installed the furnace system in their basements. There were numerous stoves in the Singermann house: rooms that

might have been pleasant with their old-fashioned chairs and tables, were disfigured by sooty pipes that curved and twisted with the most amazing intricacy before they disappeared through the smoke-soiled ceiling. During the winter months, these pipes were red-hot, and they sputtered and coughed when the fires were going full blast. You were fascinated by these pipes that smelled of hot soot; but sometimes, the pipes looked as though they would explode with the heat, and you could hear the flames shooting through them, sharp, agile acrobats of fire.

But on the day of Michael's *Bris,* when he was no larger than a man's arm, the involved and unexpected rooms of the Singermann house were filled with songs and humming flights of conversation. In the kitchen, Mary O'Brien, the hired girl, was busy roasting meats, mashing potatoes, pouring the wine that Moses had himself made, from casks into bottles, from bottles into long, languorous glasses, red wine and strong and good. On the table were plates piled down with a gorgeous conglomeration of fruits; and there were nuts also, and candies. The stove, heavy, and gorged with chuckling coals, was red-hot through its blackness, and the room was damp with white steam and pleasantly odorous of rich, spicy foods. The dog and cat were underfoot; they yelped and screamed when thoughtless soles trod upon their meek proximity. They hid themselves under the table and watched sharply a confusion of lower extremities. There was always a dog and cat in the Singermann house. The dog had come as a pup, and Rachel had knit her brows and decided on the name of Rover. When you said "Rover" to her, she pricked up her ears and wagged her mutilated tail. And even after she had given birth to puppies, she didn't mind her name at all.

Moses entertained his guests for the *Bris* in the sitting room. The Rabbi Lachter who had a flaming red beard that

fell from his chin in the shape of a W, walked to and fro, snapping out fireworks of prayer. He prayed all the time he was in the Singermann house, but his prayers were longer, more intense after he had been paid for his services. Rabbi Lachter was physician, kantor, butcher, politician, and preacher. He prayed in the synagogue in Silver Street; presided over committee meetings that had to do with the upkeep of the synagogue; killed chickens that they might be fit and kosher for true believers; butchered cattle in the stockyards near the Great Northern railroad station; and his advice could be spiritual, if you desired spiritual advice. But most of the time you wanted practical advice, and the rabbi could be surprisingly practical.

Moses Singermann had invited many friends to the *Bris* of his youngest son, Michael. Isidore Bachmann, a fellow Roumanian, was present, and also Bertha Bachmann, Isidore's wife, and Lina, their dark, shy daughter. When Bachmann first came to America, he had learned English very quickly and become a policeman. But Mrs. Bachmann said, "What is there for a policeman but maybe only trouble, a broken head and the hospital for six weeks?" So Isidore left the police force, and he went "in partners" with another man and bought a lead mine in Basin. Now he went about grandly, and without being asked talked of his "mining interests" as though he were W. A. Clark or F. Augustus Heinzie. "I am making plenty of money," Isidore told his friends. "In a few years I will go to California and retire. Or maybe I will go in for politics." But Isidore had been saying these things for many years, ever since he had retired from the police force, and no one believed him any more, and some said that his mine was just a hole with nothing in it but trouble.

Bertha Bachmann was fat, but she always said "stout." When people came up to her and remarked, jokingly, "My, how fat you are getting, Bertha," she would draw herself

together regally and say, "Maybe I'm a little stout. At my age . . . it shows I'm healthy to be a little stout." Lina, her daughter, was slim and retiring. She was a favorite with the Singermanns because she resembled neither her father nor her mother, but was herself more like a Singermann than a Bachmann. "How does it come that such a sweet girl like Lina should be a daughter from the Bachmanns?" was the usual question. Her father and mother were people who shoved, but Lina was always behind, sweet and apologetic. Everybody liked Lina. Moses was frank in saying that she would make a good wife for David.

The house was frantic with guests. There was Charlie Glassberg, the trunkmaker, and Gershon Sheff, the expressman. These two were poor men, but Moses was very fond of them, in particular Gershon who was fine and big and ruddy. Glassberg did not make trunks. He sold them. But the European custom of calling men by their trade was still the habit in the Singermann family. Ben Bank was the winemaker because he kept a saloon, and Joe Shilling was the cigarmaker even though his tobacco shop was the largest in town, and despite the fact that he had not made a cigar for many years.

Moses had invited many, and many had come who had not been invited. The Singermanns did not mind that. A son was an honor, and Moses was only too pleased to bestow the gifts of hospitality on the day that his newborn son would be introduced, for the first time, into Jewish society. Moses was in his element when he could entertain his friends. He liked to be thought a gracious host, a Jew who dispensed food and wine with a liberal hand. It gave him a position in the community that others envied, and this envy gratified Moses beyond words. Not even the good-natured Mr. Frien, president of the synagogue, or the rich owner of real estate, Isaac Blumkin, was so generous with his gifts. Moses disliked small dinners and intimate, formal

parties. He never invited friends to his house unless he could bid them be seated to a banquet.

Yet on ordinary days, in the bosom of his family, Moses Singermann was not a generous man. He would give a stranger to whom he had taken a fancy anything at hand, and he never sent away one in need. But Rebecca was compelled to nag him for her small allowance. He was extremely careless and forgetful where the comforts of his own family were concerned, and Rebecca's clothes went threadbare before he would acknowledge that she needed a new dress or coat.

Mary O'Brien, the hired girl, had set the table until there was hardly an inch of tablecloth showing, and the guests were casting greedy glances at the food, rich and palatable, and smacking their lips in anticipation of the orthodox feast. Mary thought all these people amusing, and when she visited her sister in the Irish suburb of Walkerville, she talked for hours about their peculiarities. They were personalities out of a storybook to her, and she would regard them as though she were being introduced to characters who had just stepped down casually from Mars. "They're hathen, but they're quare hathen," she told her sister before they started on their way to attend five o'clock mass at St. Patrick's.

Mary knew that most of Moses' guests had come to eat rather than to pray, but she was not astonished that this should be the case. She remembered wakes in Ireland when the guests had become deliriously drunk, forgetting the corpse which had, indirectly, been the cause of their entertainment. A corpse had no feeling, not on this earth at any rate; the corpse could not be angry with people who had come to mourn, hilariously, its demise. But the baby in the Singermann house, about to undergo a painful operation, would suffer vocally, while, a few feet away from him,

wine was drunk, jests were passed, and a large portion of the Jewish population of Silver Bow made merry. The hired girl thought this jubilation a sin, but since these hathen were lost to the sight of God, anyway, it was rather an exciting sin, a rare show.

For one reason, at least, the Singermann children were happy because of Michael's *Bris*. The five older sons were relieved that they would never be compelled to undergo another circumcision. Theirs was done and over with long ago, and they could view the sufferings of their baby brother with a certain tremulous equanimity. Only Joseph suffered with Michael; and this was because the rabbi who had operated upon him so long ago had done so with a rusty blade. Fortunately, by now, Joseph was completely healed, but he would never forgive his religion for having caused him so many sick days. It had been impressed upon Joseph that circumcision was good for a man, not only spiritually, but physically as well. He had been told that even Christians who were sensible had their sons circumcised. Yet Joseph had met many Christians who had never heard of the operation. They seemed to be in perfectly good health, and they were happy enough.

When the rabbi raised his knife, Joseph could see the sharp blade gleaming in the sunlight that streamed through the front windows. He saw the rabbi cut a hair of his red beard to test the blade's sharpness, then turned his eyes away. He was suddenly sick, and he rested his head against the wall and bit his lips.

The room in which the rabbi stood with the blade upraised, while he murmured a prayer, was crowded with men, and they held glasses of wine in their hands. Moses lowered a little cheesecloth ball of sugar soaked in wine to the infant's mouth so that the child might be pacified. The keenest interest was shown in the operation by the men. The women were more sensitive; they did not enter the

room, but stood about Rebecca's bed attempting to console her. Joseph, with his head still turned to the wall, heard the first faint squeals of the baby; he shut his ears, but he could not be deaf to the child's wailing. Only a few minutes ago, the baby had been sleeping peacefully in his mother's bed. There had been the faintest smile on his lips, as if in sleep he had been having a romp with kindly fairies that no adult could ever possibly perceive.

The child was shrieking now, breathlessly; but the men had raised their glasses and were drinking his health. *Mozeltof!* they saluted one another. "May he live long and be a happiness to his father and mother!" Joseph thought that his brother must be suffocating, his cries were so furious, so agonizing. One of the women came to where Joseph stood, and said, "Foolish boy. It is nothing. Tomorrow he will be all right again." And Moses, seeing his oldest son so pale, murmured, "Are you still a child that you cannot watch the circumcision of your own brother? Soon, maybe, you will have a child of your own, and then what will you do, you big *schlemiel,* you?"

But Joseph was thinking: Only a day or two of happiness, and then the world begins drawing your blood. After the first wound, there are many, many, and so few of them heal.

It was a strange thought for Joseph Singermann, who was so energetic, so like a live electric wire. He was the active one of the family, and he did not have much time for brooding.

Rebecca Singermann lay propped up in the large brass bed in which Michael had been born. Her usually pale skin was now almost dead white, so that all feeling and life were concentrated in her large, dark eyes. Within their depths, it was possible to read many stories, and some were tragedies, and some were set to music, light and quick and slow and

mournful. Now, these eyes were filled with a kind of helpless pity. The rabbi had just taken the baby away from her, and she could hear him crying in the other room. Such a sharp, painful knife to use on such a small baby! She could not have told you that she was suffering sharper pain than her newborn son; she could not have expressed what she felt in words, one after the other, all of them making a phrase, a thought that meant suffering and pity.

She felt Michael's pain just as deeply as she had felt Joseph's, twenty years before in Roumania. It was possible that she felt the pain more keenly now, for she loved this youngest one more than any of the others. She had almost died in giving him birth. She should not have had him at all. When Harry had been born, the doctor had advised against having another child. And she had thought that she would never be a mother again, certainly not at forty-three. But she and Moses were so stupid about these things, and the child had come upon them unawares. Rebecca had felt a little bit ashamed when she first realized that another child was stirring in her. She had felt bitter against Moses with his lustful body and his deep faith in orthodox Judaism. He should not have come to her when they were both in their forties and conceived a child. How these women must be laughing at her, these Americanized women who knew so much and whispered jokes to one another!

But when it came near the time for delivering the child, there was something beautiful about it and she could not exactly explain why. She felt that he would be a different child from the others, but in what way different she could not think out clearly. Perhaps he would be like her father, tall and slim with passionate dark eyes and a temperamental manner. She would call him Michael after her father who was dead now, buried in holy earth, in Jerusalem.

He would be her last son. She hoped that he would not

be ashamed of her when he grew to manhood and began to know things. She knew so little about places and things and people. She knew that she was ignorant, and perhaps Michael would hate her when he came to realize how stupid she was, her mind dark as an underground tunnel. She could not read English, but she had been able to read Roumanian in her father's house in Barasht, even though there had been fourteen in the family when her mother died. She had been compelled to care for the ten children who were younger than herself, and that had kept her from learning things. Then her father had taken a second wife, and there were five more children. Her father had been a strange, dreaming kind of man who forgot about his children the moment they were born. They had to raise themselves the best they knew how. Yet it was difficult to be angry with Michael Lebowitz. If you cursed him out for his shiftlessness, his daydreaming, he would look at you as if you were out of your mind, and then walk away and play his violin. Was it his fault that he had so many children? The women would sleep with him.

Rebecca's mother had been a shrill, nagging woman who neglected her own children, let alone the children of her predecessor. From the time she was old enough to walk, Rebecca Lebowitz had worked like a horse, cooking, scrubbing, gathering the fruit of the vine, the plants of the ground. It was strange that she should become a beautiful girl with ivory skin and dark, deep eyes so blended with mystery and passion. And her hair! It was pitch black and fell down below her hips and took on the colors of the sky, the lamps, the storm. It was blue and green and crimson black.

Michael Lebowitz moved, dreamed, and thought to the lilt of music, audible and unheard. He could sing in a fine tenor voice and he played the violin with more than average skill. He was learned in Hebrew lore and wise in the ways

of the world; and it was cruel that such a talented man should neglect his daughter so. Sometimes, he would awake as from a fairy dream and realize that Rebecca was the most beautiful of his children. He would draw her dark head to his breast and sing her a Roumanian gypsy song.

> Across the river the red fires are burning.
> Do you see the red fires, my beloved,
> Burning through the autumnal mist, across the river?
> They are like the fires in my heart,
> Fires that burn through the mist of my heart's weariness.
> O Beloved! Do not quench the red fires of my heart
> With the cold, dismal rain of your words!

It was such a beautiful song and it made the tears come to Rebecca's eyes. She begged her father to teach her other songs from the gypsies. She had a sweet voice and she was always humming melodies to herself, not too loud, for there was always a baby in the house who might be disturbed. The baby would stab the sweetness of her song with his raw, red screams. Michael promised his daughter that he would teach her songs of the Romany tribes; but he made many promises, few of which he remembered.

Rebecca worked on and on until her eighteenth birthday; and then, because all the girls in the village were getting married, she grew afraid that she might wait too long. In the same village was the tavern of Moses Singermann who was looking about for a wife. Moses came to Michael, and said, "I have observed your daughter, Rebecca, and she suits me. What will you give if I take her off your hands?"

"Nothing," replied Michael Lebowitz. "I have nothing to give. But it is best that you take her away before someone else comes along and snaps her up. She has no money, to be sure, but have you noticed her hair, her eyes, her breasts? And she is as strong as an ox. She takes after me."

Michael's reply did not put Moses in a very good humor. It was the custom in the village to insist upon a dowry when one took a wife. And here, this good-for-nothing Michael Lebowitz had nothing to give, not even a tablecloth or a chair or a trunk. Moses resolved that he would have nothing more to do with Lebowitz and began looking elsewhere for a wife.

But he had an eye for beauty and he could not disentangle Rebecca from his senses. It was very unusual to take a wife who brought nothing to your business, your house, but then Moses was well able to take care of himself. Everyone said that you couldn't get better wine in Bucharest than the vintage which Moses poured out for you in his tavern. The wine put life into you and you felt better than King Carol, himself. You felt that you must dance at once and kiss full red lips. And what more was there in life than to dance, to love, and to go to the synagagues regularly and pray to Jehovah?

Rebecca was flattered when Moses came to call for her at her father's house. No one had ever called for her before; the many children in the house did not encourage a lover's advances. Could it be that Moses wanted her for a wife? That would be a godsend. She would be free of all these brothers and sisters, and she wouldn't be called upon to wash their dirty diapers and feed them thin oatmeal that always ran out of the corners of their mouths. She would no longer be compelled to listen to her stepmother's shrill cries, "Lazy one! A girl like you should have a man and children of her own instead of waiting around my house and eating up my food!" Of course, she would be sorry to leave her father, yet what was he after all but a dream, a mythical figure, so beautiful, so far away? She would miss his songs about the red fires burning across the river; she would remember, wistfully, how the radiant toes of many melodies had danced up and down the strings of his violin.

When Moses told her that he wanted her for a wife, she answered that she was ready. There was virility in Moses, great strength and assurance. His kisses stung the soft pallor of her cheeks, and his arms crushed her until she could hardly breathe. It was well to marry a man who was strong, a definite, decided man. And he liked to read. Perhaps he would tell her of life in Bucharest, of men and women there, richly garbed men and fashionable ladies who watched the king ride through the gay streets of Bucharest.

Rebecca was quickly disillusioned. Moses had married her because marriage was expected of him and because it was considered sinful for a young Jew not to produce sons. You couldn't say of Moses Singermann: He is a selfish, cruel man. For there were times when he laughed loudly in his chest and sang ribald songs edged with kindliness. And when his first son, Joseph, was born, he brought Rebecca a blue dress from Bucharest and a whole box of golden oranges. And he peeled the oranges so that Rebecca might suck them in bed. He could be gentle with people when they were sick. Always, he would bring oranges, most of which he would eat himself. He would lean his weight against a bedpost and say gently sardonic things.

He was proud before the world when Rebecca presented him with a son. *Leben zoll ehr, vochzen zoll ehr!* Yet he was incapable of treating Rebecca as an individual with feelings, dreams, and desires of her own. She was simply a woman who must keep his house, cook his food, and bear his children. It was not long before Rebecca was as deeply buried in work and slavery in her husband's house as she had been in that of her father.

Four children within ten years caused Rebecca Singermann to become a highly nervous, moody woman; yet she never altogether lost her peculiarly wistful beauty. In some ways that beauty was enhanced, for the added pallor of her face seemed to center all vividness and intensity within her

eyes. Now, after the birth of her seventh child, her black hair was powdered with silver, her cheeks were slightly sunken, but her eyes were as haunting as ever.

As Rebecca lay propped up by the pillows in the bed where she had nearly died, she could not help thinking that the God of the Jews was unnecessarily hard on the women of his chosen people. She heard the men, stimulated by wine, laughing and joking in the adjoining room, and she thought that they had much the best time in the world. What was her suffering to them? What was it to Moses, even? If she had died, he doubtless would have felt sorry; perhaps he would have closed his store until after the funeral; but in a few weeks, new cares would have engrossed him, and he would not have remembered her so keenly. She had fulfilled her duty so far as he was concerned. She had borne him six sons and a daughter, and all were alive, thank God. She had also fed him food and warmed his bed; but he often complained that she was a miserable housekeeper, and on certain occasions he had refused to eat the food she prepared. He had gone into the kitchen himself to cook his favorite dishes. He had yoked her to his body, but he had never bothered about her mind and spirit. He did not credit her with a mind, and as for a spirit—well, wasn't that a strictly masculine possession?

Rebecca wept softly; her tears were crystalline against her pallid cheeks. She wept for her dead youth that had always seemed just outside the door, dancing there like a graceful elf behind impalpable trees. In her father's house she had often held out longing arms to the elf, but he had scampered away into the dim distance, laughing at her over his shoulder. In the house of Moses her youth had gone into the lives of her children; and now, with Michael's birth, she knew, for certain, that youth was definitely out of her reach and that she was an old woman. The thought made

her weep softly, and each crystal tear was a day of spring falling away from her.

Mrs. Bachmann saw Rebecca weeping and chided her in a gruff, but good-natured voice. "For why you cry? You got such a fine boy, and your husband, *kenorra,* he is a strong, healthy man, making plenty of money. You should be glad that you have so many fine boys and a girl she will be a blessing to you in your old age."

"What is it to have children?" asked Rebecca in a wistful voice. "You suffer for them and you work so hard all your days; and when they are big, they forget you. Already my boys they are going their own ways. Soon they will be married with children from their own. Why should we suffer so much, Bertha, only to lose everything in the end?"

Mrs. Bachmann, chewing vigorously on a piece of biscuit soaked in wine, was inclined to be optimistic. "You bet I don't worry about my children. Let them have the *tsauris,* I say. It's enough I bringed them into the world—after that, I don't care so much."

Rebecca envied Mrs. Bachmann her philosophy, but she could not begin to understand it. Though the two women were close friends, they were as far apart as the poles in the way they lived their lives. Bertha Bachmann had only three children, of whom the shy and dark Lina was the oldest. Her two sons were jolly blond boys who somehow had raised themselves without consulting their mother. Mrs. Bachmann looked upon herself as an emancipated American woman, and she felt a mixture of affectionate contempt and pity for Rebecca who clung unconsciously to her European beginnings in life. As an American, Mrs. Bachmann considered it her duty to dress well and buy a new hat for every season of the year. She thought Europe behind the times and was in the habit of telling people who did not know her well that she had been born in America. Her favorite phrase was "up-to-date"; everything European was

old-fashioned and beneath contempt. America was the land of the future, the Great Paradise of the Middle Classes. Mrs. Bachmann had hopes of advancing; she prayed that her children would lose every mark of European bondage that they may have inherited from her and Isidore. "Be American and up-to-date," she would counsel her two jolly blond boys. "Make money and advance yourselves. Don't let the *Goyem* get ahead on you. In America, everybody is as good as the next one."

But Rebecca would never be able to forget Europe. The manners and customs of the Old World were deeply ingrained within her, too deeply to be whitewashed by a facile American veneer. She did sometimes try to be "up-to-date" as Mrs. Bachmann did, but she realized the futility of trying, only to fail. She did attempt to dress fashionably, to talk English or the American variant of English, well, to "get ahead"; and there were times when she felt ashamed of her inability to adapt herself to the American background. In that part of America to which the Singermanns had emigrated, it was the custom to deride everything European. There was so much contempt for Europe, that Rebecca whipped and scourged herself into feeling glad that she had come to the New World. Every day she reminded herself that she must try to be more American. She must learn to read and speak the language about her; she must keep herself neat and fashionable; she must encourage her children to stay wide awake in the same way that Bertha Bachmann encouraged her sons. Because, thought Rebecca, if all my friends and relations are so happy to be in this country, if all of them thank God three times a day that they are out of Europe, then surely there must be something behind it all. It can't be just talk, can it?

There must be something wonderful in America that she knew nothing about. She had been too busy having children and rearing them to take advantage of all these wonderful

opportunities. Her children would grow up Americans, and they would undoubtedly share in the blessings that America was eager to bestow upon all her citizens. As for herself, well, she would try hard to be American so that her children would not be ashamed of her. She would try to forget Europe—the vineyards, the blue skies, the songs, the red-tiled houses, the green valleys.

The rabbi brought the screaming baby to her bed, and she consoled the child in Yiddish. *"Vus vehnst di, mon liebe?* Do not cry. Think of all your advantages, advantages I never had. You will grow up in this free country. You will learn to read books and sing songs. The whole world is before you. Sweet son! The pain will soon go away. Aaaaaaa-hoh! Aaaaaaaa-hoh! Aaaaaaaa-hoh!"

The guests departed, merry with wine and laughter. The rabbi put his sharp knife back into its leather case and pocketed the ten dollars that Moses Singermann gave him. Mary O'Brien began clearing the table, piling up plates and bearing them, like so many towers, into the kitchen. She worked late, scrubbing and drying these plates, sweeping up crumbs from the rug, removing the extra leaves from the dining-room table.

The baby had stopped crying, and Mary entered Rebecca's bedroom to see how her mistress was getting on. Rebecca's eyes were closed, but she was not asleep. "Did you maybe empty the pan under the ice box, Mary?" she asked wearily.

"Oh, sure," said Mary. What a funny question to ask, and that poor infant nearly murdered a few hours ago! "How's the darlin'?" she asked and bent over the child that lay by his mother's side, its face wrinkled up with suffering.

"He sleeps, the little one. Ain't it too bad, Mary, he should have to suffer like this?"

"Ah, the swate thing! It seems such a shame to cut him up like that, an' him so tiny, too."

"Better he should be cut up now as later, no, Mary?"

"Now, I shouldn't be a bit surprised but what there's a lot in what you're sayin', ma'am. An' how d'ya feel? Weak, you poor thing?"

"Very nice, Mary, thank you, much. And maybe you didn't forget to give the cat and dog something, they shouldn't make a noise all night and wake up the baby?"

TWO: THE NEW WORLD

A letter from a cousin had first turned Moses' thoughts to America. This cousin wrote from Minneapolis: *There are many Jews here and they are all getting rich. Money is free and easy in America, and you are as good as anybody else. The Christians in this country respect the Jews and there is good feeling. But what, I ask you, have you in Roumania? All day you work hard, and at night you are so tired that not even the softest pillow will bring you rest. You pay taxes to the king and queen so they can buy another carriage, another palace. . . . Why don't you come to America where you will be repaid for your hard work? Your children will be better off and they will receive free educations in the public schools. They will learn to be independent. There are many of our countrymen making good money, peddling fruits and vegetables in the streets. And some of them have diamond rings.*

It had been a poor season for the grapes in Roumania, and taxes had been higher. Yet Moses did not look with favor upon the idea of removing himself and his family to America. He was over thirty, and that was old to start over again in a new country where you did not know the language and the customs. Besides, Moses had a genuine love for his native land. This soil was familiar to his tread, this air filled his lungs with joy! How red was Roumanian wine, how merry were Roumanian men! It was true that many Roumanian Christians looked down with jealous eyes upon the Jews. There had been pogroms in certain of the provinces, and a Jew was never safe from humiliation at the hands of an empty-headed religious fanatic. Yet even after

he had taken this prejudice into consideration, Moses could not see how he and his family would be benefited by emigrating to America. In Roumania he was sure of a certain income, and he was at ease in the constricted circle in which he moved. How could he be sure that America would receive him kindly?

A fresh Balkan war caused Moses to change his mind. A Roumanian by birth, he was subject to military service at the call of his country. He had experienced enough of military discipline to make him heartily sick of soldiering; and his love for Roumania was not strong enough to overcome his aversion to the army and to war. Moses had enough common sense to realize that fighting for his country would not improve his lot or the position of those who were, like himself, members of the lower middle classes. These countries in the Balkans were always at swords' points. Men were butchered, business was paralyzed to make holidays for the nobles. After each war there was a recurrence of anti-Semitism. If the war was lost, the Jews were blamed. If the war was won, the Jews were accused of having pocketed the spoils of victory.

It was no easy task to get out of the country with war brewing, but Moses was willing to chance imprisonment and possible death in the endeavor. The adventure proved easier than he had first anticipated; a few bribes judiciously proffered, and he had his passport and railway ticket through to Amsterdam, at which port he had little trouble in procuring his passage to America. Accompanying him was his oldest son, Joseph, who had just passed his tenth birthday.

Moses said to Rebecca, "Do not worry after me. I will go to this American city, Minneapolis, and when I am settled in a house I will send for you." At this time, he was the father of four children, Joseph, Rachel, Louis, and David. The last was a child whose hours were gay with sturdy laughter, and Moses was grieved to part from him. Rebecca was almost

inclined to give her husband up to the army rather than have him go to a country thousands of miles over the ocean. Who could tell? The ship might sink or Moses might be lost in that strange land where there was a different language and peculiar customs.

Rebecca wept and nagged; she foresaw starvation for herself and the children, prison or worse. This was her first serious combat with her husband's stubborn will, but she was to learn that there was no impressing him with tears and threats. He was the Lord of the household, and in European Jewry there is no debating with the Lord. A woman is a chattel; her purpose is to raise children and keep house. The husband does not look to her for intelligent advice, and he resents her meddling in his affairs.

So Moses and Joseph departed, flying across Europe from the war-crazed officialdom of Roumania. The vessel was four weeks in crossing the Atlantic, and heavy tempestuous seas were encountered. Moses was a poor sailor, but the water could not corrupt his vigorous, earthy health. Joseph suffered agonies throughout the filthy passage, and Moses had to carry his small son off the ship in his arms. But the onslaught of New York, its vividness, swiftness, and din, caused Moses a keen delight. New York was a city to thrill and amuse a man of his active disposition and virile physique. He might even have remained in this city had he not written his cousin in Minneapolis to expect him.

Yes, this America was truly a remarkable country, thought Moses, as the train carried him across the vast expanse of land. Rivers, hills, farms, how great, how rich-looking! How puny Europe seemed now! This was a country to create ambition within the hearts of the most sluggish. The new land did not seem lovely to Moses, not so sweet to look upon as the vineyards of his native Roumania. Even to the peasant eye, America was hard and crass. Faces were as though they had been hewn from stone. Men were thin and brusque, and

women were too beautiful to look upon with any degree of comfort or the least familiarity. Moses traveled up the Hudson and noted what a great river it was, how magnificent to the eye. Yet he had no feeling of affection for it. He journeyed over the fields of Ohio, through the sunflower flatness of Indiana, and into Illinois. Chicago was a monster to him, a sooty dragon snarling at him, and he was amused and pleased, for he was a man to fight such dragons. The vast railroad stations were like palaces, except that everyone was a king here and there were no soldiers dressed in gaudy uniforms. Then all one night he watched the trembling fragrant shadows of Wisconsin through a day-coach window, and morning found him in Minneapolis with the extremely fatigued, but enormously curious Joseph at his heels. New York had the brilliancy of brass; Chicago was dirty gray and black; but Minneapolis was the color of ivory. Sometimes, near the lakes, near Minnehaha, it was a silver green.

Moses did fairly well from his first day in Minneapolis. He had not come across the great ocean to fail. Where others were becoming discouraged and lazy, he was sharpening every instinct to get ahead. He had a direct way about him, and a half-whimsical, half-sardonic humor that appealed to his customers. After a few years he was making a comfortable living for himself and his family. The commission merchants came to know him very well, and they sold him firm vegetables and fresh fruits. "Look at that Moses Singermann," they said. "He can see the worm without breaking the peach."

First, there was only Joseph to help his father on the peddler's wagon; but after Rebecca arrived from Roumania, there was Louis, and sometimes, David. They learned to know the spacious, well-kept streets of Minneapolis as they had never known the narrow thoroughfares of the Rouma-

nian village. Of a sunny day, it is pleasant to ride along in the peddler's wagon while Moses cries out his wares in a strong, melodious voice, "Po-ta-tis! New po-ta-tis today! Radishes with onions with green parsley!" In the early morning, the unpaved streets of Minneapolis are fresh and sweet from the water wagon. How fine it is to be riding along a rutted street smelling the earth made sweet and fresh by the water wagon just ahead! How sweet it is and long ago, before the pavement came. Often, the rain descends upon the wagon in heavy torrents, and Moses opens up the large umbrella fixed to the seat. The boys huddle close to their father, and the horse is all glistening in the rain, but he does not seem to mind and the rain-water trickles down his sides, under his belly. The umbrella keeps us safe and dry, but the rest of the world is drowned. Sometimes, the sun comes out through the rain and a miniature rainbow arch keeps pace with the horse. Louis says that the harness is made of the rainbow's colors. "But how can that be?" asks Joseph. "Harness is leather to feel and touch and smell. But nobody has ever felt a rainbow. Nobody has ever held a rainbow in his hands."

On Sundays, Moses did not peddle his fruits and vegetables. This was the day the family went picnicking. Up early in the morning, Rebecca and Moses would carry out the food and place it in the wagon. Joseph and Louis would harness the horse and David would turn the garden hose on the brightly painted wagon until it sparkled in the sunshine. It was fun to give the horse a bath, especially in hot weather. His eyes were soft with gratitude and he tossed his long gray mane with an ecstatic, sensuous pleasure.

If there was not a baby in the house, or one on the way, Rebecca would accompany her husband and children on these picnics. Louis was fascinated watching her dress. First, she would struggle into a bony corset, and Louis had to pull the strings behind as hard as he could, while Rebecca

groaned and fretted at the tightness of it. Louis could never understand why his mother wore a corset if it gave her so much pain. The corset was an American innovation that Rebecca had taken to at the suggestion of Mrs. Rosen, her next-door neighbor. "You should not to go out on the street without a corset," Mrs. Rosen warned Rebecca. "All the people will laugh on you and say, 'Look, look on the Greenhorn!' " But the corset was not nearly so fascinating as the bustle. This was the inflated wire pad, the shape of a half-moon, that Rebecca wore to give her skirt a fashionable bulge. It made her look like a restrained kangaroo hopping along. It was fun to play with the bustle after Rebecca had taken it off. It could be used as a boat to set sailing in the bathtub, or for a football. Rebecca had a habit of leaving her bustle around in places where the children could find it, but she was angry when she saw it being put to undignified uses. Mrs. Rosen had impressed upon her its importance as an aid to style. "A bustle is something to make people look on you," explained Mrs. Rosen with great seriousness. "Without a bustle, you couldn't be a lady. People would think you and your children had to depend on charity. Without a bustle you would be just nothing."

Stiff in front and bulging behind, Rebecca would be ready to start on the picnic, and then the children would whoop with laughter and wrestle one another in the curiously empty wagon. Moses was in good humor on these days, for relaxation always put him in a happy mood. He loved the outdoors, the rutted roads and the free sweep of the sky. He loved the sound of the horse's hoofs clogging against the road and raising clouds of dust. He would draw Rebecca's attention to the greenness of the leaves, the colors of certain wildflowers, the songs of birds. And Rebecca would nod her head; and sometimes she would weep seeing how all the strain and irritation had gone out of Moses, and there was only goodness in him.

The wagon would bump and rattle over the railroad tracks of the Northern Pacific, the Chicago, Milwaukee, the Great Northern. The rails were burning steel that rushed away into a wistful infinity. After several hours of riding, the Singermann family would reach an elevation of land and see before them the Mississippi, the stolid, sluggish river with its tiny islands and numberless contrary currents. Moses halted the horse and rose from his seat, stretching himself with a slow, expansive delight, and yawning prodigiously. He unharnessed the horse while Rebecca burst open the bundles containing food, knives, forks, spoons, and a red tablecloth. The boys kicked off their shoes and ran shouting with freedom to the river's brim, while Rebecca called after them to be careful. For in her prayers on Friday after sundown, she would say, "From fire and water, O God, protect us and our children."

Rachel was uninterested in the river. She had brought a book along, one by Marie Corelli, and though she could not as yet read with full comprehension, she was absorbed away from the picnic, the red tablecloth, the Mississippi. She was particularly interested in the tall, beautiful heroes who strode so splendidly from the front to the back of the book, leaving behind them the inalterable footprints of words.

Under the trees, the Singermanns ate their dinner, sometimes chicken, sometimes *gefulte* fish, and always dishes of sliced tomatoes and cucumbers. Moses brought along bottles of beer and wine, and he would take long, earnest gulps of the wine and taste it with all his senses before swallowing. Rebecca often joined him drinking beer, but the wine went to her head quickly and she rarely tasted it. The children would sometimes take sips of the wine diluted with water, but the beer was bitter for them and made them shudder.

The day creeps slowly across the sky, staining the clouds with her rose-colored wounds, and there is twilight in Min-

nesota, above the Mississippi. Rebecca clears away the remains of the dinner and rouses Moses who has fallen asleep against a tree. He rises complainingly, sniffing at the sweet night air, the cool river air. Below them, the lights on the many docks flicker on and off like so many mischievous eyes; and river boats, with their huge paddle wheels, cast off rivulets of gray foam as they whistle their way down the Mississippi. Where are they going, these boats? Where will they be tomorrow morning and the morning after? Always the paddle wheels revolve and revolve, eating up the slow, slow Mississippi.

On their way home to the house on Sixth Street, Moses raises his voice in a song and the children join him. If he has drunk too much wine, he takes off Rebecca's funny, lopsided hat and twirls it around and around on the end of his finger, until Rebecca rebukes him with a sentence of Yiddish, half anger, half laughter. She almost loves her husband in these moments, they are so few in his life of bustle and toil. She looks forward to these picnic days when he drinks too much wine and then takes her hat off her head and twirls it around and around. Tomorrow he will be sullen again, immersed in his peddling, without a kind word for her and snapping impatiently at the children.

Some Sundays they go out to Minnehaha Falls. Sometimes there are the lakes to be visited, Harriet and Minnetonka. It is great fun to watch the lovers out in rowboats, the men in their high, stiff collars perspiring over the oars, the girls, prim and genteel, sitting upright against cushions, tucking their ankles out of sight.

When it rains on the lakes, thousands of diamonds appear gleaming and glittering on the water. When the sun breaks through the rain, the world of every day is forgotten, and an eerie splendor takes possession of Harriet and Minnetonka. How softly the word falls on the ears of the Roumanian

immigrants. Min-ne-tonk-a. In the old days, Indian braves swam these lakes from end to end while laughing maidens waved from the shore, their white teeth showing like brief lightnings.

These days are so brief to the Singermann children, sweet, swift songs in the harassed monotony of their youth. The next morning means imprisonment in the schoolroom, and after school the peddler's wagon. But it is not the same wagon of yesterday. Now it is a vehicle of labor, of hardship and strain. The romance and color are gone. There is even a different sound to the horse's hoofs plop-plopping over the streets. Today, he is just a hard-working horse drawing a load of potatoes and green onions and cabbages. But yesterday we stood on the shore and watched the rain fall softly upon the waters of Minnetonka.

Moses was a fiercely ambitious man, though it could never be said of him that he had a clear-cut goal in mind. After eight years in Minneapolis, he was growing impatient of being merely a peddler. He could not help but see how many of his own race had stores of their own, clothing, furs, and jewelry. He felt abased when he saw these princely merchants in the synagogue and how they looked upon him with disdain in their eyes. The cousin who had first written Moses to come to America had gone farther West and was now a storekeeper in Helena, Montana. He was getting rich, and he wrote another letter to Moses, enumerating the advantages of the Northwest. "Of course, my beloved cousin, you must not come here to Helena which already has too many clothing stores. But there is Silver Bow with its copper mines. Miners make good wages and need goods."

"So I will sell my horse and wagon and go to Silver Bow," Moses told his wife in Yiddish. "My cousin writes from Montana: 'Wake up! For in Minneapolis you are wasting your life away, and here there is gold in the streets.' "

Rebecca had accustomed herself to Minneapolis, and the thought of moving away filled her with resentment. "Maybe a devil is running after you, the way you go from one place to the next," she remonstrated. "Is it not bad enough we should be so far away from our homeland without still going further?"

"It is not your place to say what we should do!" Moses stormed at her, his eyes blazing. "You are a woman, and your place is in the kitchen with the pots and pans."

"To a place like Silver Bow, he wants to take me," sobbed Rebecca, "where maybe there is not one Jew and our children they will grow up like *Goyem.* Ain't it enough we come over the ocean without going like gypsies into the wilderness? Go! Go! But I will stay here with my children!" Since arriving in Minneapolis, Rebecca had given birth to Sol and Harry, and her body had become a tangle of sensitive, painful nerves.

"Vus radst di, maschigina?" said Moses turning on her, his underlip thrust out in the familiar manner. "Talk, talk, talk, that is all what the wives know to do. Did I ask for your advice? I tell you, your place is in the kitchen with the *rossila,* the roast."

"You should be ashamed to talk such a language on me!" cried out Rebecca in a voice that trembled with her hatred of him. "All my days I have worked for you like an animal. Do you think it is easy to be the mother of six children, all so young? You come home and want a big dinner ready on the table, but do you ever ask, 'How are you feeling, mama? Maybe you're a little tired today.' Do you ever speak a kind word on me? Did you ever bother your head maybe I need a new dress or a *bissel verginiggen*—a little joy? I will not go from my house, do you hear? Go! Go to Montana. But in this house I will stay!"

"Maybe you will wear the pants and make a living for the children?" asked Moses, his words dipped in sarcasm.

"All right. Stay. Who wants you, an old woman like you?"

Rebecca bit her lip and remained silent. A few years previously, she would not have dreamed of talking this way to Moses; but of late months, an accumulation of wrongs was churning her to bitterness. She realized that she was rapidly becoming an old woman, her strength and beauty waning. Frequent and intense as her rages were becoming, they served only as boomerangs upon herself, weakening her in health and tearing at her tightly-strung nerves.

"If I stay here in Minneapolis, always I will be what I am —a poor peddler," Moses went on in a softer voice. He felt a sudden pity for the woman he had chained to himself. It was true, as she said, that she worked herself to the bone for him. But was it not her own fault? She knew that he must spend all of his time earning bread and butter for the many mouths to be fed. She lacked the capacity to better her condition, and he was too troubled with business cares to help her. He often wished that there was more of the solicitous husband and parent in his character; but he dreaded being affectionate at this late day. Rebecca was now so accustomed to his callousness that she would have been highly astonished had he displayed any tenderness towards her.

For several weeks, Rebecca wept, pleaded, and burst into hysterical tantrums, but Moses had his way. The horse and wagon were sold, the furniture was boxed, and a trunk was filled with apples so that the children would have plenty to eat on the journey. It was a new and exciting experience for them to ride across the golden wheat fields of North Dakota and the stark bad lands of eastern Montana. But when they began to climb the tumultuous Rockies that led to Silver Bow, Moses wondered at the contrasts of the American scene: the great rush and congestion of New York, so stony and mechanical; the soft, lush country that lay about the Mississippi; the flat sun-stricken lands of the Dakotas;

and now the vehemence, the rise and fall of the Northwest. They held their breaths as the train climbed ten thousand feet above sea-level and then descended five thousand to the vital town that lay beneath Big Butte Hill. After eight years in Minneapolis, at the age of forty-five, Moses Singermann had reached the climactic city of his American adventure.

THREE: SILVER BOW

You are riding along in the very heart of the mountains. The train is climbing into the sky, and all about are giant boulders and trees whose roots are precarious in pitiless, sheer landslides. Then without any preparation you see, hundreds of feet below, the first houses of a town. It is as if a giant had been sitting on the top of the Rockies playing with many colored dice that he had rattled in his palm and then thrown into the valley below. Certainly, if you look again, the town will not be there. A great rock will have fallen and smashed it into the hard, diamondine earth! But there is Silver Bow, much closer now, less vagrant and poetic, a town of ugly houses and streets. The roofs of Silver Bow look crushed and sullen as if unable to bear the incredible weight of the mountains all about. A few miles away, the atmosphere is as light and intoxicating as champagne; but in the town, each infrequent blade of grass is fighting the smoke and sulphur of the copper mines and smelters. The streets are steep and narrow, rising and falling. You stand on a street-corner and see how the town is fleeing, pursued by the swift, inevitable mountains.

There, on the hill looking down upon Silver Bow, were the copper mines, tall and stately and contemptuous. The copper mines ruled Silver Bow, and the state of Montana as well. Nowhere else in the world was there such a rich treasure of copper as that which ran in ruddy veins under the turbulent, unexpected streets. Thousands of miners were employed, and very few were American born. Mostly, there were blue-eyed lads from Ireland with rich brogues and

hard-drinking gullets, tall flat Finns and Norwegians with bony, yellow faces. The Scandinavians worked in the lower drifts and went about, even in their leisure hours, wearing yellow slickers and hip-boots. There was also a conglomeration of Southern Europeans, Montenegrins, Serbs, Bulgarians, Slovaks, Greeks. All these miners had their own societies and clubs and meeting places. And the Finns were always fighting the Irish and the Bohunks, from Southern Europe. Or they were fighting amongst themselves. The Bohunks went about in crowds, ten, fifteen, twenty to a group, and they were all brave together like that, but singly they were furtive and afraid. When a man by the name of James Canestalk came to town and said he was an I.W.W., all the warring factions united for one evening. Canestalk gabbled about higher wages and the leeches of Capitalists. He wore a red necktie and wanted a strike, and he got one for six weeks. But the Big Company that ran the works brought in the State Militia from Helena, and the strikers were bound and gagged. And they had no money to buy clothes or food. So somebody cried, "To hell with Canestalk! To hell with the lousy I.W.W.!" And Canestalk was run out of town on a splintered rail, and the strike came to an end.

The clothing stores of the Jewish merchants were on East Park Street. They caught customers with traps of words, and they were constantly dragging miners inside to sell them shoes, socks, suits of ribbed underwear, and maybe a suitcase to go away with. East Park Street was a beehive with its Jewish stores, its Greek restaurants, and its Irish saloons with swinging doors. You passed by a saloon, a door swung outward and you caught a glimpse of heavy work shoes resting on a brass rail. There was sawdust on the floor, and spittoons; but no one spat in the spittoons. You could see that when the saloon doors swung outward for an instant.

On East Galena Street, not far removed from the busiest

part of town, one block was the Red Light District, and the next block was Chinatown. The shacks of Chinatown drooped as though the boards had been infected with the juice of poppies. You went Down The Line and had a hell of a time with the girls; and then somebody would say, "Let's go and see if we can't get a shot of hop off the Chinks." Chinatown was that. Chinatown was chop suey and Chinks carrying huge baskets suspended from either end of a bamboo pole. How mysteriously they moved along in the murky dimness, weird, evanescent figures, silhouettes cut out of black silk! Chinatown was an evil place, some said. But not all the Chinks were in Chinatown. There were Chinks who owned vegetable gardens down on the Flats—the arid, wide plains south of the town. And these Chinamen who lived on the Flats were fresh with the wind and the sky, and their faces were like burned leather.

Silver Bow was a gaudy scramble of races and creeds; but above them all, snapping the whip, was the Copper Hill and the mines. Down below, on the Flats, were the smelters with their fiery smokestacks. They were ugly in the daylight; but at night, their fires burned holes through the dark blue tent of the sky. At night, you could see the red flares of the furnaces and men tending the importunate ovens. At night a smelter is glamorous if you happen to be looking on; but the poor devils who tend the fires miss the glamour. Sometimes an ambulance goes ringing down to the smelter and a workman who has been scalded by the molten copper is borne screaming to the St. James Hospital. He fights the stretcher and the internes and scars the night with bastard words.

On Saturday night, that was the time in Silver Bow when life moved, men hated and loved, and the Jewish merchants on East Park Street did a good business. The Jewish merchants ran up and down the aisles of their stores, made

sales and bawled out their clerks. They discovered that shoes and socks and overalls had been stolen from the "show" in front of the windows. Suits disappeared from racks as if by magic; suitcases were casually lifted off benches and carried away on Saturday night.

Drunks swayed from side to side, crashing into plate-glass windows, and then the patrol wagon backed up against the sidewalk and a cop stepped out and lifted the drunk out of the broken glass. The patrol wagon was busy on Saturday night, the horses galloping through the streets, striking fire from the cobblestones. First, the wagon would emerge from the alley where the police station was situated, and it was empty except for the cop standing on the rear step. But a few minutes later, the horses galloped back up the alley. Sometimes there were half a dozen men imprisoned within the wagon. And when you saw a woman screaming and tearing her hair inside the wagon, you ran up the alley to watch her being dragged into the station. That was a terrible thing, a woman like that in a patrol wagon.

On Saturday night, spielers paraded up and down the streets, shouting out, Big sale at the Gent's Furnishing Store. Baseball tomorrow at Columbia Gardens, Northwestern League baseball. On Saturday night, dope fiends shivered and jerked their way along the sidewalks of Silver Bow. Cripples who had been maimed in the mines, sold pencils and shoelaces and damned you for a dirty dog if you didn't help them out. How would you like to be a cripple, you stingy louse? Saturday night was a hell of a night in Silver Bow, for then you saw the race-track touts and the pimps and the ladies from Down the Line. And always the patrol wagons ringing through the streets. But sometimes it was only an ambulance.

On Saturday night, Down the Line, the girls were busy bitches. Roulette wheels and card games were burning holes in the pockets of workers from the Anaconda, Never Sweat,

Speculator, Leonard mines. Mechanical pianos were playing, *In the Good Old Summer Time, Rings on my Fingers, Bells on my Toes;* and many a young man was seduced away from godliness on Saturday night.

In his shop on South Montana Street, Rabbi Lachter sold kosher beef and butchered chickens on Saturday night. The room back of the shop was where he took the chicken and slit its throat with a sharp-edged blade. Some said it was the same blade he used for circumcision—but they may have been talking for drama. The chicken flapped its wings and gurgled, and the lids of its eyes fluttered, but the rabbi held on firmly until the bird had given up its impure blood. Now it was a good chicken, fit to eat; but it had been *trafe,* and it had not been Jehovah's chicken before. After he had killed a chicken in the orthodox manner, the rabbi plucked its feathers, and before long the room was fluttering and soft and wheezy with feathers. The rabbi wore a long rusty-black *kaftan* that bore the stains of numberless chickens and cattle. His collar was spotted with blood, and his necktie was frayed and leaked cotton. His shoes were badly in need of a shine and chicken feathers stuck to the soles. But the rabbi's face was perfectly impassive; his eyes were cool and calculating; his mouth was firm. Sometimes, a fluttering chicken feather would stick in his red beard, but he was too busy to notice.

Over on the West Side where lived the respectable merchant families of the town, the mine officials, the wealthy children of pioneers, there was calm. A Mexican vendor of hot tamales moved sinuously from corner to corner, wheeling his barrow before him. He was one of the inevitable and picturesque figures of the town. His voice was clear and ringing as an angelus bell; and as the hour grew later and later, his voice became more and more melancholy, as if pining away for a moonlit night in Mexico, a monastery garden in Mexico, so still except for the tinkling of an invisible foun-

tain. Ta-ma-les! Hot ta-ma-les! Hot! Hot! Hot! He was a figure of romance in the town, and his barrow, illuminated by the flares of kerosene torches, made a spot of gaiety and warmth wherever he chanced to be.

The frenzy of Saturday night in Silver Bow merges gradually into the pallid calm of Sunday morning. The priest at St. Patrick's church on Mercury Street is up before the dawn to celebrate a mass that will be attended by pious Irish girls. Sunday morning is a quiet time, and peaceful. Silence runs along the streets, and for blocks not a man is to be seen, not a sound to be heard. Even the copper mines on the hill have a look of quietude and steel beauty. They are etched against the sky with a fine, purposeful loveliness. The church bells begin to sound, the long, lazy, sonorous bells of the Baptist, Methodist, Catholic churches. It is very pleasant to lie abed on Sunday mornings and hear the iron bells striking through a gauze dream. When the newsboys begin to shout *Butte Miner, Anaconda Standard!* it is quite late then and there are smells of breakfast in the kitchen.

Moses rented a store on East Park Street and partitioned off three rooms in the rear for himself and his family. One room was used as a kitchen, one as a bedroom, and one as a combined bedroom and parlor. Moses had only to step across the threshold of his bedroom and he was in his place of business. But Rebecca despised her new home, it was so cheap and tawdry looking, so hard to keep clean. She wanted a house with proper rooms and a yard. A home is not a home without a yard where you sit and sun your hair on warm days. A yard for the children to play in, that is something to be thankful for. You can stretch a clothesline across a yard, and the wash will smell sweet of the outdoors and not of a close room. Rebecca wept for the comforts and conveniences she had left behind her in Minneapolis. In the

evening, after she had cleared the supper table, she wept for the pathetic distance of her girlhood. This was the America every one had praised, the wonderful, golden country they had admired from afar! What a disappointment! For what was the use of all the money in the world if only ugliness and vulgarity were to surround them to the grave? How her father, the creator of sweet melodies on his violin, would have loathed this country! He would have pined away to a quick death, of that Rebecca was certain. Were there dreamers and poets in this country? Poor fellows! Rebecca wept for them, also.

But Moses was too busy to form any estimate of what lay about him, what stretched before him. The moment he stepped across the threshold that separated him from his business, he quivered with the excitement of bargaining and selling. At seven in the morning, he unlocked the front door and started to carry out his "show," a display of samples of his merchandise. Two long benches were placed in front of the show windows, two at the sides. These benches were loaded down with shoes for work and dress, stacks of socks, lunch buckets, candlesticks, caps, hats, piles of shirts and pants and overalls. Slicker coats and rubber boots were hung from hooks screwed into the window framework. There was even a trunk out on the sidewalk with a sign on it, *Sacrificed At A Bargain.*

After he had labored over his show, stopping at intervals to entice customers within, Moses filled a sprinkling can with water and proceeded to "lay" the dust on the floor. The water raining through the holes punched in the neck of the can made pleasing black patterns on the floor and created a damp, musty smell. Sometimes the store smelled of oilskins; sometimes of green overalls; sometimes of dry leather; but the early morning smell of the sprinkling can meant a new day, perhaps prosperous, perhaps slow.

After he had sprinkled and swept the floor in the morn-

ing, Moses would rush back to the rear and awaken his children with mighty, ferocious cries. "Joe! Louis! David!" he would call and reproach them where they lay in bed snatching at a few blissful hours of morning slumber. "Already it is eight o'clock and you are like sons of the dead! Ain't it a shame you should snore when all the stores are stealing away our business?" Moses, of course, was exaggerating. His store was the first to open in the morning and the last to close up shop at night. But he was not going to leave anything to chance. It alarmed him that his children should not be up at the same hour as himself. There was much work to be done before they departed for school: windows to be washed, shoe boxes to be marked and put away, bales of overalls to be opened. When words failed, Moses would often snatch the covers off the beds and yank the children up by their legs and ears. His loud cries assaulted the trembling, thin walls, and naked boys ran here and there, dodging impetuous blows. "See, the sun is in the sky! Awake, you healthy but useless drags on my life! This is America, the land of opportunity, of quick sales and small profits!"

Leaving the children to grumble and whimper, Moses would hurry back into the store, eager to create business. If, after a reasonable time, no customer had appeared, Moses would plant himself on the sidewalk in front of the store and importune, cajole, threaten passers-by. There were so many mouths to be fed, so many bills to pay. It was suicide to sit meekly and wait for business to come. And when in his life had prosperity come to him unsolicited? Always he had pursued, given chase to a livelihood, caught opportunity by the coat-tails and strangled it into submission.

"Say, mister, I see by the cracks that you got in your shoes you need a new pair. I got something extra for only three-forty-nine."

"Aw, g'wan. I don't need no shoes. I just bought these I got on a couple weeks ago."

"You was robbed. You don't have to buy any shoes from me, mister, but I tell you, you was robbed. Ain't you ashamed?"

"Say, what right you got to talk to me that way?"

"Because I feel sorry for you, mister. I feel sorry for a man who's a sucker. And that's what you are, just a sucker."

"Is that so?"

"Come inside, and I will show you a pair of shoes for half the price you paid for them what you got on and twice so good."

"Leggo my arm, for Chris' sake. Who d'ya think you're pullin'?"

"Look at that hat you got on, mister. Ain't you ashamed to go home to your wife with that hat?" Moses removed the hat so that the man could study it from a detached point of view. "You call this a hat? Come in, friend. Take a look. It don't cost you nothing to look. I see you're a miner. I know lots of boys from your mine and I treat them like brothers. And also—don't run away, friend—this is what the boys say to me. 'Mr. Singermann,' they say, 'I want I should thank you for that hat what you sold me. It's so good like a Stetson what they charge ten dollars for.' Always I get compliments from my customers. Come in, friend, I show you. Maybe you need a shirt or underwear or socks or a valise for a little money, or maybe I can interest you in a suit of underwear."

"Well, I might come in. Only I don't say I'll buy anything. But I might take a look around."

Moses was constantly bully-ragging his customers and mocking them in Yiddish, but few were offended by his methods, and many came to admire his rough humor and sarcastic temper. He was not a good business man so much as a lover of merchandise; his methods were those of impetuosity and recklessness rather than systematic salesman-

ship. To the end he remained a tavernkeeper. But he quickly became a character in Silver Bow.

So after two years, he rented a larger place on the same street, installed new fixtures and entered the second phase of his storekeeping career. He also rented a house in South Dakota Street for the family and presented two hundred dollars to the synagogue as a mark of gratitude and respect.

The Singermanns were five years in Silver Bow before Michael was born; and at this time Moses' hair was beginning to thin on the top of his head, and there were streaks of gray at his temples and in his beard. He remembered that he was no longer a young man, and what had America given him in these past thirteen years? Moods of introspection were rare with him; he had little time to sit about and think over his position in the world of men. From morn until night he labored in the store he had established, and during his working hours he was a pell-mell, frantic man who acted impulsively and reasoned but little. Sometimes he would come to a full halt and realize his hot temper, his vulgarity, his grossness; and he would pray to Jehovah, "Forgive me, O Lord!" But if he prayed thus on Friday after sundown, he was sinning again on Saturday. For had not *Adenoi* set the Sabbath apart as a day of rest during which no business was to be transacted? But what could Moses do about it? Saturday was the most profitable day of the week, the day when the miners had the most money and did their purchasing for the week. If bills were to be paid and fresh merchandise ordered from wholesalers, it was impossible to keep the Sabbath holy.

When the clothing clerks formed a union, a law was passed compelling all merchants of Silver Bow to close their stores at six in the evening. Moses protested and fretted, but several fines taught him that the law was real and to be respected. So it came about that he now went home of

evenings and had more time to think, to place himself as an individual in the American environment. After dinner, he would sit in the dining room with the Hebrew papers before him, a glass of hot tea at his elbow. He read the news of the world, and the tea soothed his tired body and stimulated his mind. Rebecca, after she had cleared the table, would sit near him and sew; but sometimes she would only listen to what he had to say.

And one evening, Moses glued his eyes on the newspaper before him and raised the glass of tea to his lips. A foreign news dispatch at the bottom of the page had caught his attention. It told of the annual wine festival held in a small Roumanian village. *The villagers gathered in a forest clearing and hung great colored lanterns from the branches of the trees. All night there was music and dancing, and the festival did not end until dawn when an autumnal shower fell from the sky.*

Moses lifted his eyes and turned to Rebecca. "Ah, it is now they have a good time in Roumania," he said to her in Yiddish. *"The villagers gathered in a forest clearing and hung great colored lanterns from the branches of the trees.* . . . Remember, Rebecca? It was just such a night I saw you for the first time. Your face was like a moonbeam under the trees."

Rebecca was startled for a moment. It was not often that Moses spoke of the past. He was rarely sentimental. Tonight, his gentle words were caresses to her tired spirit. From afar came the cry of the tamale vendor, like the sweet and piercing cry of a whippoorwill, and that clear, ringing voice seemed to bring the Old World back to her. *The villagers gathered in a forest clearing and hung great colored lanterns from the branches of the trees.* The words in the newspaper brought the glowing scene before her eyes, and she forgot Silver Bow, the mines, the taint of sulphur in the air. She was transported back to Roumania, under the blending colors

of the lanterns, the stars, and the moon. There was her stepmother gossiping with a neighbor; she saw her tall, graceful father playing his soul away on his violin. Rebecca could not help weeping at these recollections. "Read more," she said to Moses. "Is that all? Only about the lanterns under the trees?"

"That is all," sighed Moses. He leaned his forehead against the palm of his hand and he looked tired and worn. "Maybe in a few years," he said, "we will go back to Roumania for a visit. How glad they will be to see us! My old aunt, now she is over seventy years, will look on me like one risen from the dead. And we will go out to the wine festival again and dance under the trees like it says in the newspaper."

"A-hoh!" sighed Rebecca. *"Gott vehst* when we will again see the Old Country. We will be too old and tired for dancing. Every day when I look in the mirror I see a new white hair. Now is the time in Roumania when they pluck the grapes, such fine grapes, so good for the wine! Here in America you never see such grapes and they charge you yet fifty cents a basket. The *genooven!"*

"Remind me tomorrow I should bring home some Concord grapes I seen downtown," Moses said to her. "I shouldn't be sober so much. A little wine it makes the nights to go faster. And maybe we will have a dance for Rachel. Only that young man she's got, Sam Straller, he looks like he would fall apart, he's so weak. Ah, the young men these days! No strength for loving and working! If only I was ten, fifteen years younger! When you are old in America, you are dead."

"A-hoh!" acquiesced Rebecca mournfully, swaying as she did in the synagogue, from her hips, first to one side, then to the other.

Moses had picked up the newspaper and was calling his wife's attention to a photograph. "Look, Rebecca. It is Teddy Roosevelt. He is a strong-looking man, no? He

has a big mouth. The paper says as how he will come to Silver Bow. Remind me, I should register for the next election. I vote the straight Republican ticket."

"Is it difference between the Republicans and the others?" asked Rebecca. "Seems by me they are all the same."

"The Republicans make good business," explained Moses patiently. "You remember how times was so hard in Minneapolis when this Cleveland was president. He was a Democrat, and there was strikes and *mi hat zuch geschlugt,* the workers and the bosses. Plenty of people was starving, believe me."

"When you read the English papers you know everything," said Rebecca. "But what does a wife know when she can't read even English words? If maybe I could read the English papers I would know more from Democrats and Republicans. Mrs. Bachmann says as how the Socialists will win the next voting. Her Isidore she says is a big man by the Socialists."

"Bah, this Bachmann," grunted Moses. "He has a big stomach to push forward, but his head is full of lies. And what, I ask you, do the Socialists believe? If *I* make a little money, *Gott helfen,* I should divide. Divide! *Nu, horst?* I should work till my bones crack for the lazy Socialists!"

"Well," continued Rebecca, shrugging her shoulders, "Mrs. Bachmann says as how nearly all the miners are Socialists and Anarchists. And some day they will make trouble for the mining companies."

"Why should a man who is able to make plenty of money be a Socialist?" asked Moses. "Why should he throw bombs with the Anarchists and kill?"

"That poor McKinley," murmured Rebecca. "Such a smart man with such a pretty wife. She looks so sad from the pictures in the papers. It was a terrible thing that the Anarchists should kill such a fine president with such a pretty wife."

"But this Teddy, he ain't afraid from nothing!" laughed Moses, and brought his fist down on the table with such force that the pictures on the wall shook and the dog fled into the kitchen. "I would give five hundred dollars to have teeth like he's got. When you can eat everything, then you don't have to be afraid from Anarchists, Socialists, Democrats, and Cossacks."

"Why should you say that?" asked Rebecca. "How can you know what kind of man Roosevelt is? Maybe he is a grafter and takes money from the rich bankers like Mrs. Bachmann says."

"If Teddy can get money from the rich bankers he's a smart man and I give him credit. I tell you, I'm going to vote for him because he's a Republican, and maybe they are thieves and robbers, but they make prosperity for the country. The Democrats is worse as the Republicans, and the Socialists, I wouldn't give two cents for all of them. I would not spit on the Anarchists. *Faa!* That Emma Goldman. Is she not a shame on the Jewish race?"

"Her face it is very bright," put in Rebecca meekly. "She looks like she has learned a good education."

"Who is an educated man in this country?" asked Moses. "The man with plenty money, he is an educated man. He speaks, and right away the papers print every word he says. But a poor man, if he is educated, nobody knows it."

"You are right," agreed Rebecca. "Not many peoples is educated in this country. Every day there is another murder. Always people are being killed. In Roumania, you never hear from such things."

"It is because this country is yet young and people don't know what they want," explained Moses. "It is like they got a fever, a great excitement in their hearts. Everybody wants money, always more money. It is because they have this fever they lose their minds, their religion. Myself, when I am in the store, I forget everything, but sell, sell, sell. I

forget I am a Jew. I forget the synagogue. I forget the dances in Roumania. It is like a fever is burning me up. And so I holler on the children and throw shoes at their heads. Sometimes, I am sorry we come to America. I ask myself, what kind of men will my children be and their children after them? They will not be Jews, this much I know. How can they know what it is to be a Jew in a city like this where so much is cheap, where so much passes like the wind? I am afraid my children will be married to Gentiles and my grandchildren will believe in nothing."

"Already Sol and Harry they don't want to go to Sabbath school," said Rebecca. "Only today Harry wants butter on his meat like he sees the *Goyish* boys eating it. My mother, she would turn over in her grave to hear such a thing."

"Why do you not beat him?" asked Moses in Yiddish. "Then he will not ask for that which is *trafe* and sinful."

"It is bad enough we should make them work so hard without always scolding and hitting them," sighed Rebecca. "When I was a little girl, I wanted my father to speak soft words to me."

"When a man has to work all his life to make money," said Moses, "there is not much time left for soft words. Many children are better off when they raise themselves and go their own way."

"But not our children," replied Rebecca sadly. Their conversation was momentarily interrupted by Joseph who had just entered through the front door. He had been gone since dinner time, and now it was very late, but he did not greet his parents.

"Where you was, tonight?" Moses asked his oldest son.

"That's my business, I guess," Joseph snapped back. "Do you think I'm a baby that I've always got to tell you where I was?"

"What kind of talk is this?" asked Moses, and he rose

from the table carrying on his shoulders an intolerable weight of anger. "Is this a way to talk to your father?"

"Aw, give me a rest," muttered Joseph. "It's enough I hear you hollering at me all day in the store. I guess when a man gets to be over twenty-one he can look after himself."

"Yes," agreed Moses bitterly. "A man with sense in his head."

Joseph's answer was to slam his bedroom door. Moses made a motion to follow his son into the bedroom and have it out with him, but Rebecca begged her husband to end the argument. "Better you should leave him alone. He is tired, poor boy. Like a stick he is thin. Let him sleep."

Moses hesitated for a moment, then followed his wife's advice and returned to the table. They could hear their son undressing, and they heard the creak of the bed that received his tired body. It grew very quiet in the dining room after that. Moses bent over the Hebrew paper and resumed reading, his lips forming inaudible words. Rebecca sat still in her chair. Her sewing had fallen to the floor, but she made no move to pick it up.

"Ta-ma-les! Hot ta-ma-les!" came the cry of the Mexican vendor. After a time, his call was pinned down into softness, many blocks away. Rebecca recovered her sewing, rose and moved into the kitchen. She brought out the empty milk bottles and placed them on the front porch where they would be called for in the early morning. As she opened the door, the chill night air of the mountains, heavy with a bitter, choking smell of smoke and sulphur, assaulted her like a knife. She shut the door quickly and trembled. Then she returned to her chair and saw Moses' lips reading words, picking them off the page, chewing and digesting them. What was he reading now? Was it about the magnificent Teddy Roosevelt who was afraid of nothing? The details of a murder trial? Or perhaps a make-believe story, a romance? It was bad enough that she could not read English—

but Hebrew, the language of her fathers! That was shameful! It would have made her happy to read of the villagers and the wine festival and the autumnal shower that fell from the sky. "Autumnal shower," murmured Rebecca. "I remember the earth after the rain in Roumania. How sad I feel when I remember the sweet earth after the rain." And she swayed from side to side as worshipers do in the synagogue.

FOUR: JOSEPH AND DAISY

Early one morning Joseph lay in bed feeling a singular loneliness that was not unhappiness. He was thinking of Daisy Korner. He had taken Daisy to the ball given by the Charitable Daughters of Israel the night before at the Moose Auditorium. He had danced with Daisy many times, and he still felt her warmth, her teasing proximity in his arms. The particular scent she had used was deep in his pillow and filled him wtih an intense wistfulness of desire. He remembered Daisy's blue eyes, so rare, so pleasingly unfamiliar for a Singermann to see. It was strange that Joseph should suddenly have this feeling for Daisy Korner. He had known her ever since she had come to Silver Bow; she was a Roumanian like himself, and her father, Adolph Korner, was the Montana representative for a South American banana commission house. He had thought Daisy rather silly the first night he had seen her. She had been doing a cakewalk in the parlor of the Korner home, and every few minutes she would stop in her dance and burst into helpless giggles. Joseph thought these giggles quite unnecessary, and he had come away from Daisy's house with an unfavorable impression of her.

But he had gone on seeing Daisy quite regularly after that first visit. She was a puzzling girl, sometimes so happy and yielding, and at other times so hard and clever. You never quite knew about her, so you were always expecting something exciting. Joseph was not very observant of people. He could see a man day in, day out for months and be unable to tell what was the color of his hair or whether he was short or tall. It was much the same with girls. He would be close

to Daisy and she would seduce him into strange, troubled thoughts. He would see that her hair was brown with golden lights; he would realize the lovely softness of her complexion and the way her red lips turned up at the corners. He would hear her laugh. And then he would leave her and try to remember the exact shade of her hair and the shape of her mouth. He would try so hard, but it didn't seem to do any good. He was angry with himself, and he felt that never before had there been such a fool in the world.

But it was not only a voluptuous delight that Daisy Korner caused him. She was shrewd. She had a fine brain for business. One evening in the week she would go over her father's books in which were long columns of figures, and she would add and substract. No matter how insignificant a mistake had been made, Daisy would always find it. Joseph was deeply impressed by her cleverness. You would think that a girl who was so good-looking would be extravagant and careless in money matters. But Daisy always knew just how much she spent and whether the purchase had been worth while. Whenever Joseph saw her he thought how fine she would look back of the cash register in his father's store.

Joseph escorted her out to Columbia Gardens, Silver Bow's one amusement park, and wanted to spend money on her. He wanted to buy her candy and take her into the Scenic Railway, where, pressed close to her shoulder, he could watch the high mountains of the Alps and the low, lush meadows of Holland. But Daisy would refuse to go into any place that meant an expenditure of money.

"That's expensive," she would say. "What's the use of wasting money on such foolish things? Let's walk around in the fresh air." And she would inhale deep breaths of the cool air and lift her arms and cry, "Ah-h! Ah-h! This is wonderful. And it don't cost anything."

"But let me buy you a box of candy," Joseph would plead with her. "Only a twenty-five-cent box of these chocolates

to take home with you." Joseph was sad to think that Daisy would not let him buy things for her. He had a wild desire to clothe her from head to foot in fine clothes and furs and frills here and there, even though his common sense told him that Daisy was wise in refusing his gifts.

"It ain't necessary, Joe," she would say. "Twenty-five cents is too much for candy. Buy a bag for ten cents and that's good enough. Save your money and you'll get somewheres. Do you always want to be just a clerk in your father's store?"

"I'd like to have a store of my own," he said fiercely. "I hate to work for my father. We don't get along at all."

"Put your pennies away then," Daisy counseled him.

Daisy's thriftiness and prudence caused Joseph to forget her brown hair with the golden lights, her mouth turned up at the corners. He was fired with ambitions. He would break away from his father and open his own store; and Daisy would sit back of the cash register all day, her merry laughter chiming in with the ringing up of sales. He would have his own home to come back to every evening, and there would be Daisy with his dinner all prepared. He would talk over the day's sales with her. He would discuss with her the relative merits of different wholesale houses. Was Lindeke, Warner as reasonable on cotton underwear as Wyman, Partridge? Daisy would keep his books and write his business letters. And then she would kiss him and go to bed with him. Did she not answer his every desire? Was she not wise and was she not beautiful?

He must marry. He must get away from his father, his younger brothers. He must start in business for himself. These desires were turning Joseph hot and cold, happy and miserable. So many young Jews of his own age had their own homes and were their own bosses that it irritated Joseph to think he had to work for a father who appreciated him so little, who threw shoes at him in a burst of temper.

It was degrading, humiliating to be forced to put up with these things.

The ball given under the auspices of the Charitable Daughters of Israel brought Joseph closer to Daisy. Twice a year the Jewish ladies would sponsor the ball and charge one dollar a ticket. In this way, the Charitable Daughters collected several thousands of dollars in a year. The hungry were fed, the ragged and homeless clothed and sheltered. There is no more charitable race in the world than the Jews. They are forever thinking up new ways of collecting funds for charitable purposes. Balls are given, kaffee-klatches are held, picnics are contrived. Those who are prosperous give with a prodigal hand, but not modestly. It is a great pleasure for me to help my poor unfortunate brother who is in distress. It is more than a pleasure—it is a sensual delight. One wealthy man will say to another, "Well, I gave fifty dollars to the Consumptives' Hospital in Denver." And the other will say, "Piker! I gave a hundred!" And the one who gave the extra fifty dollars will experience a vivid throb of pleasure. He gave fifty dollars more than So-and-So, and So-and-So ought to feel pretty small, a man like that, and with his income, too.

So it was a rich, gaudy night when the Charitable Daughters held their Semi-Annual Ball. Many marriageable daughters were there dressed in their brightest; and the young men wore their little fancy programs attached by colored strings to their buttonholes. Each program was stamped in purple with the seal of David, and inside were listed the dances. 1. Grand March. 2. Waltz. 3. Two Step. 4. Mazurka. 5. Waltz, and so on through some twenty numbers and five "extras." With the dying note of the last "extra" many a young man wrote the last X on the last pretty program that would ever dangle from a bachelor's buttonhole.

Daisy was the most conspicuous girl on that night of the

ball. She wore a long velvet dress that looked as if it had been dyed in a rare old vintage wine; her arms were bare to the shoulders and her finely shaped neck was unadorned by the trinkets that would have spoiled its beauty. She would never look so well again.

It was Daisy's way to enter a ballroom late so that her entrance would be noticed by everybody, so that people would look at her and say, "That's Daisy Korner. She looks mighty nice. But where does her father get all the money for those dresses?" Daisy thrived on such remarks. She would go home and tell her mother, "I was the prettiest girl at the ball tonight. Sarah Edelstein had on a more expensive dress and Rachel Singermann wore that pair of slippers she got from the Brown Shoe Company's traveling man. But everybody looked at me."

When Daisy first came into the ballroom leaning on his arm, Joseph was somewhat embarrassed. He did not regard himself as worthy of escorting such a beautiful girl into the light and publicity of Jewish Silver Bow. But he was also proud. All the young men envied him, and he knew that they would go home thinking, That Joseph Singermann must have prospects or Daisy Korner wouldn't go to a ball with him. I guess the Singermanns are doing a good business.

Perhaps it was the strong punch, served in the alcove, that made Joseph feel that way towards Daisy. But she went to his senses, and after a few dances he forgot that he was such a lucky man to have brought such a beautiful girl to the ball. He only knew that she had agreed to give him every waltz and nearly every extra. He was not a very graceful dancer, but with Daisy in his arms he was lithe and expert beyond all his fondest hopes. He moved over the dance floor in a daze of delight, and the fragrance of the flowers, of the powders and perfumes and silks was deep in him. Daisy's breasts were soft against him, and she appeared to

swoon in his arms. The music seemed to disentangle itself from the tips of her fingers and the strands of her hair. Joseph could not remember that he had spent the day in the store waiting on coarse, heavy muckers from underground, selling them hobnailed shoes and ribbed wool socks. All his skin was receptive to Daisy, and languorous, sensual words dreamed through his mind. In the early morning hours when the punch ran more thinly through Joseph's veins, it occurred to him that Daisy was shrewd and a sharp bargainer. Had she not told him that she had made her own dress? Had she not insisted on riding to Moose Hall in a street car instead of a carriage? So Daisy became both Romance and Sensible Reality to him, and he could not say which was more beautiful or even whether this about her was Romance, and this other, Sensible Reality.

So it was that the morning after the ball Joseph got out of bed rubbing his eyes with the realization that he was in love and that he must marry Daisy Korner. He recollected that in all the times he and Daisy had been together, he had never spoken of marriage, though they had talked about his future. He remembered that she had always counseled him to take care of his money so that he could open his own store and be free of his father's tyranny. What had she meant but that she would be his wife? There was no other explanation. So he certainly was a fool to have let the grass grow under his feet when some other man would have spoken to her right away, saying, "Daisy, let's get married."

He would speak to his father. Joseph knew that Moses did not care particularly for the Korners. He was forever ridiculing Adolph Korner's business. "A fine business for a man—bananas!" But Joseph was determined to marry Daisy no matter what Moses would have to say. True, she never attended services in the synagogue, but she attended the new Reform Temple on Friday evenings. Though Moses had

nothing but contempt for "Reform" Jews, he would have to accept Daisy. What difference, Joseph asked himself, did it make whether you attended a temple or a synagogue? Both were Jewish churches, both believed in the same Jehovah. The only difference, as far as Joseph could see, was that the congregation in the Reform Temple was made up of a wealthier class of Jews who preferred to worship in the chaste spaciousness of a large, airy church rather than in the congested discomfort of the synagogue.

But Moses thought that the Jews who attended the temple were snobs. They were, for the most part, beardless—a sinful state—for every hair of his body should be sacred to a descendant of Moses and Abraham. Reform Jews were men and women diluted with Protestantism. They did not wear the characteristic *tallith* draped over their shoulders, and they removed their hats upon entering the temple. In the synagogue the prayer books were in Hebrew; but in the temple the prayers were printed in both Hebrew and English. The rabbi of the temple was addressed as "Doctor" and he was usually a graduate of an American Rabbinical school. He knew his Hebrew, but it did not flow from him in a torrential flood of melody; he spoke the ancient tongue with an American accent and somewhat apologetically. The rabbi did not sing in the temple. Neither did the congregation. Prayers were cold and formal and lifeless, interspersed by the voices of the choir in the balcony. It was much the same kind of choir that is to be found in Baptist churches. The voices were good enough, but the Hebrew was ludicrous since most of the singers were Christians out to earn a little extra pin money. The whole atmopshere of the temple was filtered, cleanly, serene. There was nothing of the struggle, the sense of a race pursued by tragedy that is to be found in the synagogue. In the temple, the aisles were swept and garnished, the benches were polished until they shone. But the synagogue was small and smelled of old prayer books,

candle-drippings, the white silk that enclosed the *Holy Torah,* the warm, perspiring bodies of men who work with their hands.

In the synagogue, Moses, with his broad-brimmed black hat pulled low over his eyes, had tramped up and down the narrow aisles, raising his beautiful voice to the rafters, a voice profound with an agony of lamentations and of golden ecstasy. He had beat his breast until the sound of his fist against his heart was heard to the very last row of benches. Judaism was not a standpat religion as Moses lived it, not a calm, ordered service spoken in refined accents, colorless and imitative. His faith was of the Israelites of Saul and David, a fight, a cry to Heaven. His faith was conflict, bitter tears, the iron of agony. Jews were not meant to sit at the feet of an immature youth who spoke of *The Psychology of Anti-Semitism.* Each Jew was his own rabbi and he must make his own prayer to God. Moses and Abraham, David and Solomon are in my blood. Life is intense, dyed with the crimson of blood, the purple of passion.

So Moses was contemptuous of the Reform Temple, saying that it lacked only a gilded cross and then it would be complete.

Joseph thought of these things when he considered telling his father of his love for Daisy. He thought of the fact that Daisy ate ham, and he remembered a rumor about town that she had been seen in a Christian Science church. He had seen flesh of the pig on the Korners' table. At first the sight of this food had revolted Joseph, so deeply ingrained in him was a certain obedience to the orthodox belief. Worse still, Mrs. Korner served butter with her meat dishes and she ate bread during the Passover. Joseph had spoken to Daisy about it.

"I love ham," Daisy said. "There's nothing wrong about eating food that you like. It's a real American dish. It ain't as if we was still living in the Old Country. The trouble with

Jews like your father is that they love to roll around in misery. I hope you don't get to be like your father, that's all. What I always say is, 'Laugh and the world laughs with you, eat ham and enjoy yourself.' The orthodox Jews are always crying about something. And the rabbi is so dirty. I bet he never washes his hands when he gets through killing a chicken."

"But ham is unclean," argued Joseph. "At least that's what good doctors say. It makes you sick."

"Don't you ever believe it. It's just as clean as any other kind of meat. But the main thing is that I like it. Don't you see, Joe, it's just the way you have of looking at things. Your father believes in old-fashioned ideas and he wouldn't change them—not if the world came to an end. It's the way he was brought up, narrow, strict, you know. That's the way with those Old Country people. But me an' you, Joe, we're a new generation."

"I think papa would kill me if he knew that I ate ham," Joseph said, blushing. "Of course it's wrong the way he feels that way. I can see where you're right, Daisy. The only way to progress is to have new ideas. Sure, I believe that."

"Your father thinks that the only way to be religious is to act old-fashioned and go to that awful synagogue. Why, I wouldn't mingle with those people," said Daisy contemptuously. "They're not my class."

Joseph was awed by these highly original sentiments of Daisy's. They were almost blasphemous to him, but they seemed to have an outer edge of common sense as Daisy delivered them. He swallowed a few times, and then, in a trembling voice, asked if it were true that she had been seen in a Christian Science church?

"It certainly is," said Daisy. "I've been reading Mary Baker Eddy's book, *Science and Health,* and it's just too beautiful. The words are like poetry. And in this book it says every-

thing is love. A bad thought is error. The trouble with Moses Singermann is he's full of error."

"But, Daisy, maybe this book believes in Christ? You know. Maybe it ain't Jewish. I don't think it's right to read a book like that."

"I tell you, it's beautiful, Joe. And you got to read this book. It'll teach you a lot. It says when you're sick to believe, to trust in God." Daisy pronounced it "Gawd." "If you believe with pure thoughts you'll get well. I tell you this Mary Baker Eddy must be a wonderful woman. To be able to write like that must take a lot of purity. You remember when I was sick last week, Joe? I had such a bad cold, my head was all stuffed up and mama kept asking me all the time if I was crying. 'Look at Daisy, she's crying," Mama said. It was only my cold. Tears kept running out of my eyes and my nose was red. I looked a sight. I was afraid to show my face in the street. And then a friend of mine lent me this book, *Science and Health,* and I read it clear through. A kind of soothing feeling come over me. 'God is love,' I kept repeating to myself. 'God is love.' And do you know, when I closed that book my cold was gone? Maybe you think I'm joshing you. But I ain't, as God is my judge, Joe."

"You mean to say just reading this book cured you?" asked Joseph incredulously. "It must be a wonderful book, all right."

"It's more than wonderful," said Daisy, her eyes alight with a great discovery. "It's divine. That's what it is. Divine. And it's an experience to go to the Christian Science church. The people who go there aren't just the masses. They're superior. And you know, Joseph, if you want to get anywhere in the world nowadays, you got to mingle with a better class of people—spiritual people. You don't find a high class of spiritual people in the synagogue. Sometimes, I feel sorry for your father, Joe, with his old-fashioned ideas like he has. He'll always be one of the masses."

"Well, I won't be," protested Joseph stoutly. "I'm going to have my own store one of these days and be independent."

"I wouldn't wish your father any harm, Joe. I tell you I love your father. He's a fine man, only he has these old-fashioned ideas. It would do him a lot of good to read this book by Mary Baker Eddy. It would do your mother good if she could read. A whole new world would be opened before her eyes. Education! Purity! Love! Think how much these things mean. Just stop to think. And the greatest of all is love."

"Love," repeated Joseph, and looked into Daisy's eyes. "Love certainly is a great thing. I guess I'm beginning to learn a lot about love lately," and Joseph shifted his gaze and looked embarrassed.

"You'll learn a lot more about it in *The Key to the Scriptures,*" said Daisy. Tears came to her eyes. "When I think how long I was ignorant of the truth, it makes me feel sad. But it's never too late to see the light."

Joseph did not tell his father about the great light that had come into Daisy's life. He had every intention of doing so, but at the critical moment his courage failed him. Moses never would have understood about love and error. He would never pick up a book with a cross stamped on its cover.

Joseph and Daisy were married in the Singermann house on West Granite Street into which the family had recently moved. They were married by Rabbi Lachter despite Adolph Korner's objections. The banana salesman had wanted the marriage ceremony performed by the young Doctor of the Reform Temple, but Moses would not hear of the plan. Korner was overwhelmed by Moses' arguments, and Daisy said that she'd just as soon be married by one as by the other. It was all the same in the eyes of God, she said.

All the members of the Singermann family were present, including the ten-months-old Michael who squealed in his cradle. The sight of Rabbi Lachter and his rusty black *kaftan* sent the infant into hysterics as if he were remembering the *Bris* and its pain. So loud were Michael's wails and protestations that he threatened to interfere with the replies of the bride and groom. The situation was saved by Mary O'Brien, who lifted the frantic child into her arms and bore him screaming into the kitchen.

Rachel was present with her attentive young man, Sam Straller. Louis had on a red necktie and chewed Sen Sen until his breath assumed precedence over the carnations that Daisy had pinned to her bodice. Joseph had wanted American Beauty roses, but Daisy had frowned at the expense. Brother David was there and near him stood Lina Bachmann, her modest beauty in charming contrast to Daisy's elaborate assurance. Sol watched the wedding from one corner of the room, thinking it very grand but wishing that it were over so that he could go out and play football in a nearby vacant lot. Harry had a new violin tucked under his arm and he was going to be asked to play after the ceremony. Harry was musical, as were all the other Singermanns. David possessed a cornet which he could play loud and strong. He was fond of saying that a violin, now, was a sweet instrument, and pretty, too, but it took a man to play the cornet. It took lungs to blow out a Sousa's march on the cornet.

After the ceremony was over and the rabbi had received his customary fee of five dollars (and a box of cigars from Moses), Daisy changed to a severe gray suit with the jacket cut square and the skirt flaring out into the innumerable pleats that were fashionable at the time. She looked extremely smart and rather formidable. This was her "traveling suit," for she and Joseph were going through Yellowstone Park on their honeymoon. As they drove to the rail-

road station, Joseph complimented his bride on her clothes, feeling the material between his fingers to discover whether it was really as good as it looked. He was deeply impressed when Daisy explained that she had made the suit herself from materials purchased wholesale from The National Suit and Cloak House. "It cost me exactly twenty-five dollars all told," said Daisy proudly. "If I wanted to buy this same suit retail you know what it would cost me?" Joseph guessed, but his figure was too low. "It would cost me forty dollars," said Daisy.

She seemed very happy.

When Joseph and Daisy returned from the Park, they set up housekeeping in a flat on South Alabama Street and bought a complete set of mission furniture for the dining room. Daisy felt very wise and exclusive about the mission set. It had been purchased wholesale from Butler Brothers in Minneapolis, and the same set retailed in Silver Bow for twice the sum they had paid. Everyone who called on Daisy praised the mission set. Everyone was astounded when Daisy told them what it had cost.

"I can't believe it. I think they were giving it away to you. I never heard of such a thing," everybody said.

"It's because I concentrate," said Daisy. "I study. It takes a brain." She smiled condescendingly upon her guests. "Some people have a knack for giving parties. Some have a knack for cooking. I have a knack for buying. It's because I study what I want. Before I write to a wholesaler I make a list. Maybe this one has quality but his prices are too high. Maybe this one has been stuck with goods on his hands. I check off the houses I want and I study the catalogues and I write letters. All the time I'm thinking it over, you understand. My brain is always working. It's only after I've investigated very careful that I make my selection. It's not everybody who has that knack."

"Daisy Singermann, you're wonderful," everybody said.
"Care," said Daisy. "Care and precaution does it."

A few months after their marriage, Daisy showed signs of restlessness. It bored her to stay home and wait for Joseph to return in the evening. She was a miserable housekeeper; never had Joseph tasted such poor food as that which Daisy prepared for him; never had he lived in such ill-kept rooms.

Coming home one evening to find the beds unmade and the breakfast dishes unwashed, Joseph lost all patience and demanded to know what she had been doing all that day. Daisy, herself, had just arrived in the flat, and she explained that she had been with her father, writing business letters for him.

"Maybe you're married to your father," said Joseph sarcastically, slipping off his arm bands preparatory to washing his hands. "After a man has worked all day it ain't exactly a pleasure for him to come home to a house like this."

Daisy removed her coat and hat and seated herself on the unmade bed, emitting a long sigh. "Well, if you want to know the truth, Joe, housework just makes me sick. It's all right for women who haven't got an ounce of brains. But why should I have to cook and wash dishes? Me with my special kind of mind? I certainly didn't marry you to be your servant, so get that out of your head right away."

"I'd like to know what you did marry me for," said Joseph gloomily, throwing himself full length on the bed and burying his head in the pillow. "You're so damned ambitious, that's the trouble with you. You're so ambitious you don't care what happens to me."

"Now that ain't true," remonstrated Daisy looking as though she were about to cry. She leaned back so that her head rested on his shoulder. "Joe, darling, let's not quarrel. Always have a sunny disposition and your troubles will fade

away. A bad thought is error." She pressed her lips to his forehead. "I wish you'd speak to your father about letting me be cashier in the store."

"But I have! I have!" Joseph exclaimed into the pillow. "He's not used to women in business. He says they drive customers out of the place."

"Just the same, I want you to talk to him again," insisted Daisy. She lay beside him in the bed and took him in her arms, kissing his lips. "Don't you know, sweet, that I've always wanted to try my hand at business? Didn't I always tell you that before we were married? Of course I'm ambitious, darling, but it's for your sake as well as mine. If I leave you alone you'll always go on working for your father at thirty dollars a week. And at the end of ten years we'll be the same poor church mice we are today. Honey, are you listening?"

"Yes. Yes."

"Don't be cross, honey. Look at me. Up-se goes! Now wipe that scowl off your face. Daisy don't like her handsome boy when he scowls like that. There! Now don't you feel better, Joey? You will speak to Papa Singermann about my being cashier?"

"I'll speak to him," said Joseph indulgently. "But if I come home with a broken head you'll know the reason why."

"I'd like to see anybody break my precious's head! Now get up, darling, and wash your face with cold water and we'll go out to dinner." She took hold of one of his hands and helped him to his feet. "You've been working hard today. *That's* the reason you're so cross. But I'm going to help you from now on, so pretty soon we'll have our own business and plenty of money in the bank, and maybe——" Daisy's pause was dramatic.

"Maybe what, Daisy?"

"Can't you guess?"

"Not a baby?" and Joseph's pale face suddenly became very animated. "You're fooling, baby doll."

"Well, you can never tell, darling. And when our son grows up we'll want to give him every advantage. We'll want to give him the start in life we never had."

"Sure we will. But he ain't here yet," growled Joseph. "Where are we going to eat tonight? No, not at that chop suey joint! Let's get some American food for a change. Let's eat at the *Butte Grill*."

"But that place is terribly expensive, Joe," said Daisy, weighing herself down with the enormous Merry Widow hat she had made herself. "And you got to give such big tips. I think that Chong Lee's is good enough. For fifty cents you get a nice meal and a five-cent tip is plenty for them Chinks."

"All right," said Joseph, looking disappointed. "We got to think of the son that ain't even here yet."

"But he will be, dear. If God is good to us."

Willy-nilly, Joseph's wife installed herself in the store, armed with Mary Baker Eddy and a box of chocolates. For the succeeding twelve months she remained at the cash register, and not all of Moses Singermann's sarcasm and fury could uproot her. Moses raged and threatened, but only force would have driven her from her place, and Moses did not believe in striking a woman, at least not this particular woman. Daisy stuck to her post and kept smiling. Insults and taunts failed to discourage her, and when depression lay heaviest on her fair head, *Science and Health* lifted her from the slough of despond. Moses might rage at her, but she could only regard him as an insect and murmur "God is love" behind her slightly trembling lips. For it was not Moses who had insulted her but a germ of error rampant in the material body. By this time, Daisy had fortified her-

self with the belief that error, like an ant, can be effectively stepped on.

When Moses refused to pay her a salary, Daisy paid herself a daily stipend of five dollars out of the register. This was only justice, Daisy told Joseph. She relayed the money into her stocking and from the stocking to the State Savings Bank. At the end of twelve months, there was this strange coincidence: the savings in the bank were large enough to justify leasing a store-room that had recently been vacated on the opposite side of the street. It was Daisy who consulted the landlord about rent and a lease; and it was Daisy who placed orders for merchandise.

Ever since he had arrived in America, Moses had always found Joseph at his side, son and comrade. They had quarreled often, and upon numerous occasions almost come to blows. But at critical moments, when Moses had looked to his son for support, he had not found it wanting. With Daisy's arrival as a daughter-in-law and cashier, the father had felt the son's withdrawal, but he had not brooded over it. He had not dreamed that the day would come when Joseph would leave him. And now that extraordinary occurrence was about to take place.

Even after Moses was convinced that his son was opening another store, he could not believe that the two establishments would be separate and under different ownership. When carpenters were put to work building shelves and erecting show windows in the store across the street, Moses was often there looking on with pleasure. He held the naïve belief that he and his oldest son were to be partners in the new enterprise. The new store fascinated him with its splendid possibilities. It was a larger place than the old and it was situated on a busier side of the street. Moses looked upon the new store as a manifestation of his own and his son's success in America; not for a moment did he discern

the truth, that the store was the result of Daisy's indomitable will and unscrupulousness.

The new store was to open its doors on a Monday morning, and it was not until the preceding Saturday that Joseph announced to his father his final departure. Daisy had already left the cashier's desk a week before. She was busy across the street ordering everything into readiness.

Moses made out his son's salary check and gave it to him. Whereupon Joseph said, "Well, papa, I guess this is the last salary I draw from you. Monday, we open up across the street."

"It looks like you ought to do a good business over there," said Moses, and could not disguise the pride in his voice.

"I guess this is good-by," and Joseph held out his hand.

"I think maybe you'll maybe want me to help you, Monday," said Moses, taking his son's hand absently.

"No, I guess not," replied Joseph. "There's Daisy and myself, and we hired five clerks."

"Anyway, it would be better for me to help you," insisted Moses. "These clerks, they ain't to be trusted. Who can tell how many *genooven* will be ready for a chance to steal a pair of socks, or a necktie, maybe."

"No, papa, I guess we won't need you."

"What do you mean, you won't need me?" asked Moses in surprise. "Do you think maybe you can get along without me?"

For a moment, Joseph felt a twinge of pity for his father; but the moment was quick to pass, obliterated by a recollection of the many disagreements they had suffered. So he stamped down his pity, thinking of the way Moses had dealt with Daisy, threatening to drive her out of the store when she had come as cashier that first day.

"Papa," he said now, "I want you to realize that me and Daisy own the new store. You understand, papa? You got

nothing to do with it. You'll only make trouble if you come around Monday. It'll look bad for the clerks."

Moses was perplexed. "Are you joking with me? But this ain't no time for jokes. . . . You better go home and rest yourself so you will be ready for the grand opening. Go home now and sleep tomorrow, Joseph."

The oldest son turned away. "All right. But remember what I told you. You better tend to your own business and leave us alone."

With this final warning, Joseph crossed the threshold of his father's store into the street and left Moses staring after him.

That Monday morning, Moses rose early and pottered about the kitchen making a great noise, so that Rebecca wanted to know what was the matter and couldn't he make a cup of coffee without pulling down the roof over his head? But he was restless and nervous thinking of the new store, and he was reminded of the day he had set foot in New York, and later, Minneapolis. So many curtains in his life, rising on new scenes, new adventures! Would Joseph be up now, and would there be a big crowd waiting to get into the new store?

Moses walked to his own business and carried out his show and dusted the shoes on the benches, but his eyes were on the place across the street. Customers came in and wanted things, but he waited on them absently, eager to be rid of them. At ten o'clock, when he was free, he saw that Joseph's store was open and that a crowd was milling about the door. Moses' heart grew warm and he rubbed his hands together happily. At the moment of crossing the street, he remembered Joseph on Saturday, and his feet grew a little heavy. But he must see and feel the tumult of the new business. When you had two stores in Silver Bow, that was something.

He pressed his strong figure through the crowd at the entrance and was immediately enveloped in a throng of shoppers. The noise and feel of selling and buying shouted along his veins, and his nerves were tightly drawn strings of a harp; he could hear them sound notes. Joseph had hired too few clerks, that much was plain. Here all these people had the money in their hands, begging to spend, and they could get no one to wait on them.

Moses could not resist the lure of selling. After a few minutes, he was waiting on several customers, showing one shoes, another underwear, rushing back to the first and then to the second, helping a third to select a necktie. His face was flushed, his beard was damp with perspiration and his necktie flapped out of his vest; but the thunder and swell of business carried him aloft to exaltation. All this time, he was vaguely aware of Joseph moving quickly about the store, of Daisy at the cash register ringing up sales and calling out directions to the clerks.

They were not aware of him until he brought money to the register. He had sold a pair of shoes and was wrapping them while waiting mechanically for his change. Daisy saw him then, and was startled, but she made the change and said nothing. After a few minutes, she leaned down from her stool and whispered something into Joseph's ear. Joseph said, "Where?" and twisted his head about in different directions. Then his attention was diverted to an impatient customer.

So all the morning Moses forgot about his own store and worked happily in the new; at lunch time he forgot that he was hungry and no one reminded him that it was time to eat. The afternoon brought new crowds of impatient shoppers; they flooded the aisles of the store, submerging the clerks, beating against the shelves and showcases; and Moses was like a cork bobbing up and down in their midst, but never lost.

By six o'clock the masses of customers were thinned out; and soon the aisles were clear except for the clerks. Almost before Moses was aware of it, the store was closed and the crowds were gone. Daisy and Joseph stood about the cashier's desk and she was counting the money, the gold pieces, the silver, the bills. She looked hard and engrossed as Moses approached her. "Is it a thousand dollars?" asked Moses.

Daisy looked up abruptly from the piles of money. "Fourteen hundred and seventy-five," she answered coldly.

"It's good business," exulted Moses. "And it ought to keep up for a few weeks . . . By golly, I'm hungry now, you know?"

"Fifty and twenty-five and twenty-five is a hundred. You should have gone to lunch," said Daisy.

"How can a man eat with business like this?" asked Moses. "The place was so packed . . . eating can wait."

"It wasn't necessary for you to work so hard, Papa Singermann," said Daisy. "We've got plenty of help. We got three extra clerks for tomorrow."

"I told him that Saturday," put in Joseph. Moses looked at his son and could not make out the boy he had known. Joseph looked wary and clever beyond touching. The goods in the shelves were his; the money in the cash register was his.

"We won't need you tomorrow," said Daisy. "Three hundred, three and twenty, three and sixty. . . . Besides, you're neglecting your own business, Papa Singermann."

"That's what I say. Why don't you stick over in your own place?" asked Joseph. There was an executive remoteness about Joseph now, a strangeness that cut him off from Singermann ways and Singermann familiarity.

Moses felt the coldness, but he tried to warm it with words. "By golly, so many shoes I never sold in my life," he said. "It must be a hundred pairs of shoes I sold . . . like hotcakes."

"How much do you want, papa, for working here today?" asked Joseph truculently.

"I think we better give papa a present of ten dollars for his help," said Daisy. She removed a ten-dollar bill off one of the piles. "Papa, it was nice of you . . . but Joe, I think those extra clerks will be all right for tomorrow, won't they? We won't need papa tomorrow."

"That's what I told him before," muttered Joseph. "Didn't you hear me say I told him that Saturday?" He busied himself replacing boxes in the shelves, and the way he touched them and looked at them, they were his and belonged to him.

Moses received the ten-dollar bill from Daisy with an abstracted air; but when he realized what it was for, he placed it on the desk. "What is this?" he asked.

"Put it in your pocket," said Daisy. "Don't let it lay around."

"And you would pay me like a common clerk?"

"Maybe you want a share of the profits?" shouted Joseph, and turned about from the shelves with a white face and blazing eyes.

Moses caught up the ten-dollar bill, crushed it in his hand, then threw it to the floor. "What is this talk?" he asked in a rage. "Do you know I'm your father?"

But Daisy was calm and removed. Moses could see her above him, cold as ice and hard. There were no Singermann ways in her and no Singermann familiarity. "Don't you know, papa, that this is our store, Joseph's and mine? And yours is across the street."

"I told him that, Saturday," snapped Joseph.

So everything about him was now strange to Moses. The neckties were colors his eyes did not know, the shoe boxes had odd labels, the suits hanging on the racks were of unfamiliar materials and designs. Joseph had stepped away into another world and old pleas and threats could not reach him.

"What's yours is yours, and I hope you make much money," Moses found himself saying. "If you want we should be strangers . . . then it is so. We are strangers." The hard, pitiless lock on the door was strange to Moses and frowned at him. The show windows had an alien glimmer, and the window cards bore numerals that were difficult to read.

Moses started crossing the street and was almost run over by a passing trolley car. The motorman cursed him. When he entered the old store, he found that David was still there, brushing his hair in front of the hat-case mirror. "Well, Joe must have started out great, eh?" asked David.

"What?"

"I said, business with Joe must have been great."

"Why not?"

"You look sick, papa."

"Who says I'm sick?" shouted Moses, and glared at his son, but his eyes had a stricken look in them.

"All right. Get sore. Is it a sin to say you look sick?"

"It's a lie, that's what it is."

David placed the comb carefully between the bristles of the hairbrush. He turned away from the mirror, put on his hat and coat and walked to the door. "Good night, papa."

"David!" The boy was startled by the grief in his father's voice. "David, remember Joseph is no longer a son from mine! And that woman . . . that Christian Scientist . . . let her to roast in Hell!"

David regarded his father for a moment, then said, "Yes, papa," and walked off.

Moses turned to the desk in the rear of the store. He opened one of the drawers and removed a photograph of Joseph that had been taken when he and his father first reached Minneapolis. For a moment, Moses stared at the childish, rather sweet face. Then he opened the rear door that looked out upon a narrow, unpaved alley and threw the picture into the mud.

FIVE: DAY OF ATONEMENT

Rosh Hashana, the Jewish New Year, commenced on a Saturday, and would be followed on the very next Saturday by *Yom Kippur,* the Day of Atonement. These particular Saturdays happened to be pay days for the miners, and the coincidence made it particularly hard for the Jewish merchants of Silver Bow. Those who were sincere in their beliefs did not worry unduly about this coincidence. They were willing, even eager to sacrifice profits for the sake of their religion. Moses was such a one. Much as he loved his store and greatly as he looked forward to these golden pay days, he did not for a moment tolerate the thought of keeping his store open for business.

On the holy days it was his custom to rise at six so that he might be in the synagogue an hour later. Rebecca, too, was up at that early hour and roused the children. Since the holidays occurred in the latter part of September, it was already cold in Montana. In Roumania, it had been pleasant to wake in the autumnal morning and walk through the rich red and gold countryside to the *Shule.* Moses and Rebecca remembered the voices of the Roumanian congregation, a steady humming sound pierced by the rising supplications of the rabbi, a golden overtone in a full-bodied symphony. The contrast of Silver Bow was overwhelming and depressing, particularly on *Rosh Hashana.* It did not matter so much on *Yom Kippur,* for that was the day of mourning, of deep grief for the sins committed during the past twelve months. The dark skies of Silver Bow and the penetrating winds that swept through the town were in keeping with the doleful nature of the day.

Cold as it was, no fire was started in any of the stoves; and whatever servant there happened to be in the house at the time was given the day off. It was not proper that servants should work on the holy days, no matter what their beliefs might be. Rebecca and Moses dressed in their cold bedchamber, and the children shivered in their own icy rooms. There was no hot coffee for breakfast, but Rebecca served cake and wine. Since *Yom Kippur* was a day of fasting, there was nothing to warm up congealed bodies, and the Singermanns formed a frozen, despondent group when they left their house to attend the services in the synagogue. They left a gloomy, cold house to emerge into a dim street harsh with smoke and sulphur. But it was comforting to reach the modest *Shule,* dark and musty, warmed by the presence of many worshipers. The men with their hats worn low over their eyes, their shoulders draped by the inevitable *tallith,* or shawl, stood in many attitudes; some were bent low over the benches peering with a desperate concentration into the Hebrew prayer books; others stood with their eyes to the wall as though ashamed to show their faces agonized by grief and supplication; and still others, as if pursued by their daily temptations, strode up and down the narrow aisles, praying in their stride, beating their breasts rhythmically, on the heart, on the heart, on the heart. For it is from the heart that one must worship sincerely to Jehovah; it is as though the heart is a door to the soul, and one is beating upon that door, crying, "Open! Open! Open! I am without and lonely, and I would be in Thy presence, O Lord! *Adenoi Elehenu, Adenoi Echod!*"

On this *Yom Kippur,* Moses occupied a bench near the altar, and it was to this corner of the *Shule* that he shepherded his flock, his wife and five children. Michael was still too young to appear in the synagogue, and Mary O'Brien had taken him to her home in Walkerville for the day. Last year Joseph had been here, praying by the side of his father;

but now he was married and his wife was a Christian Scientist. There was a yawning gap where he should have stood, his slim shoulders draped by the *tallith*. There had been for Moses a kind of security in the knowledge of Joseph's presence in a *Shule,* a warmth of kinship that cannot be far from God. But now he was gone—sold to the devil! "O Lord, have mercy upon my son and show him the right way!" Moses prayed, and his voice transformed the ugly wooden shack into an immortal place. He sang and all else seemed fugitive and dying; but his songs were one with the million nights that have passed over the earth since Abraham and David and Solomon. "This was my son, Joseph. Now I am bereft of him. Forgive Thou his many sins, O Lord! *Adenoi Elehenu, Adenoi Echod!* Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God, The Lord is One!"

At noon time, Moses went outside for a breath of air. He walked up and down the sidewalk in front of the synagogue, refreshing his body and lungs and feeling the wind in his eyes. Members of the congregation stod about in small groups holding earnest conversation with one another, seeking diversion and rest in gossip—aye, even on the Day of Atonement! When the afternoon prayers began, they would be able to renew their supplications to Jehovah with a more devout and strengthened ardor. After a minute, Moses became aware that they were casting furtive, uneasy glances in his direction. They would look at him and then resume talking with great heat and animation. He caught detached words. . . . "His son, Joseph . . . Such a shame . . . the son keeps open his store on *Yom Kippur*. . . . With my own eyes . . . disgrace . . . Only of money he thinks. . . . Should I have such a son, I would hang my head. . . . And we keep our stores closed that such a one . . ."

Moses knew that they were talking of his oldest son. He dared not meet their reproachful eyes, yet every word they spoke was a wound in his body. Usually the most courageous

of men, he was moved now by a desire to flee from these critical eyes and hide away. He looked towards the door of the synagogue and saw David emerge, David so tall and strong, with grace in his walk and assurance in his manner. Moses felt suddenly free, and as he moved forward to meet his third son, he thought that Jehovah would not hold Joseph so much against him since there was David, so alive, so vivid in his young beauty.

But as David caught sight of his father, a frown appeared on his forehead, and his eyes blinked with troubled anger. For a moment, Moses was hurt by his son's expression; but it turned out that it was not with his father that David was angry. On the contrary, this was one of those rare occasions when David was thoroughly sympathetic with his father's attitude.

"Did you know that Joseph was keeping his store open today?" David whispered, drawing Moses to the edge of the walk. "Everybody's talking about it and cursing at us behind our backs. It's a shame!" David kicked at the rocks in the street.

"It was not like this before he married that woman," said Moses, throwing the blame on Daisy rather than on his favorite son. "She's to blame." And he added in Yiddish, "She should roll in the dust!"

"It ain't so much because I'm religious that I care," said David truthfully, and Moses looked moody at these words. "But how does it look for other people? Every Jewish store in the block closed for the holidays, and his open with the *Goyem!*"

"It is the woman," persisted Moses stubbornly, but he only half believed his own words. "She is to blame. She with her Christian Science! Do you think I don't know? I have seen her go into the church with the Christians. But why do I talk? He is no more a son of mine. Let her give him flesh of the swine to eat."

The worshipers returned into the synagogue. The rabbi's voice that had been droning on and on during the interlude, in a kind of passive monotone, was once more raised to its high pitch of intense supplication. Its sharpness, its vehemence of expression stabbed the quietness of the street and recalled the men and women to their various places within. "It is beneath me to talk from such a son," said Moses and returned within the *Shule,* leaving David to stand alone on the sidewalk.

David stood there in front of the synagogue staring at the cheap colored glass windows parallel with his eyes. A weak, timid-appearing sun shot its gleams through the dark, smoky clouds for a short space, and the answering reflections of the glass were imprisoned in David's eyes. He became, thus, for the slightest interval, a very striking young man, a crusader striding out of the muddled cheapness of his background. For that moment he was all beauty, all young manhood attempting to free itself from the grasping tendons of a materialistic octopus. But David's thoughts were less concerned with beauty than with ideas of right and wrong; and even his ideas of right and wrong were by no means straightened out in his mind. He only knew that it was a sin to transact commerce on *Yom Kippur.* Joseph was therefore sinning. David did not bother to argue the question to himself. For all he cared, religion might be useless and out of date. Indeed, he had entertained a suspicion of this sort for some time. But futile or worthy as his religion might be, it *was* his religion, and no member of his family had ever scorned it as Joseph was doing today.

Since Joseph had opened his own store, he had dug a chasm between himself and his younger brothers, a chasm filled with bitterness. David acknowledged that his oldest brother had worked hard; he acknowledged, too, a certain initiative and *hustle* in Joseph that the younger members of

the family did not possess. But these worthier qualities of Joseph's were overshadowed by the indubitable fact that he had seized, by stealth, what he had no right to have. He had built up a new business on the money that he and Daisy had taken from the original Singermann store. Joseph was a hard worker and Daisy a clever manager, but that did not alter the truth of the situation.

"It makes me sore!" said David to himself, and without quite realizing it, started to walk away from the synagogue towards the business part of town. He was not clear in his mind about what he wanted to do, but he was filled with that soreness, that blind anger against Joseph and Daisy. As he neared East Park Street, his thoughts became less amenable to discipline. "It's a shame!" he kept repeating to himself. "That guy thinks he can get away with anything!"

So intensely was David wrapped up with his angered thoughts that he started with some surprise when he found himself in front of his brother's store. Doubts began to enter his mind and he hesitated. Like his younger brothers, David had always held Joseph in a certain awe. The oldest son had always been a dictator to his brothers; he had aways sneered in a superior way at any idea Louis or David had set in motion, as though no one his junior could possibly say or do anything that would bear the scrutiny of an intelligent human being. Since his marriage to Daisy, he had exhibited even less patience where the rest of the family was concerned. David was fully aware of this attitude on Joseph's part, and it tended to create within him a certain despondent feeling of inferiority. So now, as he stood in front of Joseph's store, he wondered what he had better do. All his hatred and jealousy had evaporated into a moistness of inferiority. Hatred and jealousy had ceased to be effective weapons. He must be sure of himself before he entered within to do battle with Joseph. And now, he felt sure of nothing. He even wondered whether he had the right to interfere in his

oldest brother's business. The fact that they were brothers meant very little as they grew older. Each man for himself . . . that was it. If Joseph chose to look out for himself, who could blame him?

David turned his eyes to the opposite side of the street and regarded his father's store with the sign, *Closed acc't Holidays,* hanging behind the door. How deserted the place looked, how cold! And here, on the other side of the street, everything was light and business. Joseph's was the only store open in the block, and he was profiting at the expense of his father and younger brothers. All these customers thronging the aisles of Joseph's store, their pockets jingling with money, their fingers eagerly caressing the merchandise! And on the Day of Atonement, the day that Singermanns for generations past had set aside for the worship of the one God, the true God!

It was this thought, concerned with the mysterious Deity, that set David's fears at rest. He cast off his inferiority with one stride and passed into the crowded aisles of Joseph's store. There, in the center of the floor, seated on a chair that was like a throne, was Daisy, pressing the keys of the cash register and calling out instructions to the clerks who scurried like ants beneath her. Like a queen she commanded all; with one hand she reached for money and counted change; with the other she delved absently into a bag of peanuts, cracking each shell between her strong, pointed teeth. A sudden realization of her power overcame David as he halted in the aisle looking up at her. He knew, without stopping to formulate any logical train of thought in his mind, that it was this handsome, formidable woman who had ordered Joseph to keep his store open on a Jewish holiday. And with that thought came a succeeding one, painfully obvious to him, that it would be worse than useless to argue with Joseph who was dominated by this stubborn, crafty woman.

As David continued to look up at her, almost drugged by her power, she caught sight of him. For a moment she was taken aback by his abrupt materialization out of a crowd of milling shoppers; but she was quick to regain her composure, perceiving, almost instantly, David's motive for coming into the store. She waved at her brother-in-law gaily. "Hello, Dave! How's tricks?" At the same time there was an interrogative glint in her hard blue eyes, as if she were saying: Out with it! You might as well tell me why you've come.

"Where's Joe?" asked David in a voice that was just this side of rudeness. And as he asked the question, he began edging away from the chair upon which Daisy was enthroned, his eyes darting in many directions.

"He's in the rear waiting on a customer," was Daisy's almost mechanical response. "Is it something important you wanted to see him about, dear?" She had a habit of calling her brothers-in-law "dear," thus instantly placing them on the defensive. The term caused them to feel ridiculously young, mere children, and served to fortify Daisy's self-esteem.

David did not answer his sister-in-law's last question. He had caught a momentary glimpse of Joseph in the rear of the store; for an instant their eyes met, and the older brother's face had turned a trifle pale. Joseph quickly lowered his gaze and pretended an almost fierce interest in the customer he was waiting upon. Like his wife, he knew why David had come, and the realization threw him into one of his peculiar, spasmodic fits of action. He talked rapidly to his customer, shifting about nervously on his feet. He was in the midst of selling a suit of clothes, and his agile hands were in bewildering movement, patting the back of the coat, running along the man's collar, pulling at the sleeves. "It fits you perfect—just perfect," Joseph said with a deliberate, intense concentration. "You don't have to take my word for

it. Just take a look for yourself, here in the glass." And as the customer turned to the mirror, Joseph followed him, petting, cajoling, assuming the slightly cringing attitude of a clever salesman who wants to flatter his prospective victim. Yet all the while, out of one corner of his eyes, Joseph was aware of his brother's approach, the approach of a handsome young animal filled with a fury of anger. He was aware, too, of Daisy leaning far out of her swivel-chair, watching David's progress with a nervous alarm.

David spoke instantly and quickly, lest his words take fright before they were uttered and remain unsaid. "You—you damn fool! What d'ya mean keeping your store open like this on a Jewish holiday? Don't you know it's *Yom Kippur?* You're a fine one, you are!" David possessed a husky, resonant voice. There was strength in his lungs that were able to hold for almost a minute on the cornet, and his words were audible all over the store.

Joseph went even whiter and stretched out an impatient arm as if to shove his younger brother away. "Where do you think you are?. . . Who do you think you're talking to?" He made a movement as though to strike David, and then hesitated and turned to his customer who was looking at the brothers with wide, startled eyes.

It was David who closed the gap. He stood over Joseph like a great bear, and his eyes were blazing fire. He had now completely lost control of his temper, and Joseph was no longer a brother and not even an acquaintance. He was merely an exasperating worm who had somehow got in his path and who must somehow be shown his place. "A fine one you are! And all that papa has done for you, too! I'd be ashamed to look a decent man in the face. . . . Every other Jew in town is closed up, and here you are . . . shoving in money so that your wife can get fat . . . and eat more ham . . . afraid you'll lose a little business!"

They stood facing one another, almost touching, one a

strong, handsome animal, the other like a worried, petulant gnat. Joseph's anger was bottled up, tensely, tightly, and drew all the color of his face within him until he was seething with a poison of emotions. "Get out of here!" he whispered furiously. "What right have you got to come in here anyway? You've got nothing to do with me. I'll throw you out! I'll throw you out like the dog you are!"

The customer who was buying the suit stepped aside and looked on. He had forgotten that he was worried about the length of the sleeves. That, in itself, was something of an event in his life. He was a poor man and it was not often that he bought a new suit. For weeks his wife had been pestering him. "You look a perfect fright in that old suit of yours. It's about time you bought a new outfit. I saw something in the window of The Hub. . . . Now don't come home tonight and tell me you forgot all about it. I'm sick and tired . . ." He had left his wife feeling shabby and out of sorts. Now he was in The Hub about to purchase a new suit, a rare event, and the sleeves had been rather short. But he could not think of sleeves as he looked at Joseph and David.

"Why don't you throw me out then?" asked David. He did not wait for an answer and brought the palm of his hand against Joseph's face. It was a sharp, painful blow, and when he withdrew his hand, he could see where he had left a dark red imprint on his brother's face. The finger prints fascinated him. He could not move his eyes from the dark red marks with the intensely white spaces in between. He even forgot that he had struck Joseph. There seemed neither rhyme nor reason to it all. There was only that imprint, somehow horrible and shameful.

For a moment, Joseph stared wildly at his brother. Tiny crystals appeared in the corners of his eyes, but they were tears of astonishment rather than of grief. Suddenly, he lost control of his tightly packed passions. It was as though the

cork that had been bottling up the poison had given way to a sharp, explosive pressure and blown off, loosing the angry fumes within. He jumped at David, a snarling caricature of himself, and the two brothers became intricately mad, aiming a tempest of blows at one another, most of which failed in their aim. Joseph's impact forced David against a movable clothing rack; the rack swayed from side to side and finally fell to the floor and the two young men fell on top of it, becoming involved in sleeves and trousers. They struggled fiercely in this maze while customers and clerks surrounded them, shouting, imploring, fascinated at the unexpected show. Then, a woman pushed her way through the gaping spectators. It was Daisy, white and desperate. A coil of her hair had come loose and straggled down her neck to her shoulder, so that she looked like an easy woman from down on Galena Street. "Pull them apart!" she screamed to one of the clerks. "Don't stand there lookin' at 'em. What do you think we're paying you for?" The clerk looked at her helplessly, as if saying, Well, I know what you're paying me for, and it's not for this. As he hesitated, Daisy bent over and with all her strength clutched at David's shoulders. Her entrance into the tangle was the signal for the clerk to do likewise; while she held firmly to David, the clerk pinned Joseph's arms behind him and jerked him to his feet. The two brothers subsided almost as abruptly as they had begun. David looked frantically about for his hat that had been knocked off his head during the battle. It was crushed out of shape and covered with dust. He stood creasing it nervously for perhaps a minute, and then started on his way to the outer door.

He was nearing his objective when he felt some one clutching at his sleeve. He turned about, and it seemed as though Daisy's eyes were boring through him, blue daggers, sharp and pointed, twisting in his sickened consciousness. "You hit him," she gasped. "You struck your own

brother, and he's older than you. I'll always hold this against you. Barbarian! Don't think I'll ever forget it. There was no reason. . . . I could have the police on you. . . . I could send you to the penitentiary . . . as God is my witness . . ." And always he felt the eyes, like blue needles, stabbing him through and through.

He shook off her grasp, impatiently, yet he was full of sadness. He could not understand why, all of a sudden, he should be so unutterably sorry, so full of loathing for himself, for everyone. "You're to blame!" he cried out, and his eyes were brimming over with tears. "If it hadn't been for you there'd be no trouble. But it's because you changed him. Since he's known you . . ."

"I can never forgive you for this," she went on breathlessly, as though she feared that her strength would leave her before all her words were said. "It's like you was hitting me. You're like a criminal. But wait! You'll come to a bad end. You'll be in a bad fix some day and we'll—spit on you! Coming around here—the idea . . . before all our customers. . . . Do you think I'll ever forget this? Some things burn in me. I'm a sensitive woman. If it wasn't that God's truth was in me I'd . . . But wait . . . you'll be punished . . ."

"Aw, let me go!" He shook off her grasp and walked on, but she continued to follow him, over the threshold, to the sidewalk, clinging to him while passers-by looked over their shoulders. Many of them nodded to her, for by this time she was well known in the town. "Joe Singermann's wife . . . she ain't nobody's fool. . . ." Many of them stopped, but the look in her eyes bade them keep a respectful distance. "Go tell your father that I never want to look at him again. Every day I was in his hell of a store he made me suffer . . . insulting me. . . . And now that God has provided us with our own business, he sends you to pester us. But nothin' can harm us because God is our strength. . . ."

"Let me go!" said David gruffly, and walked away from her, but she stood looking after him for a long time. He could feel her eyes stabbing through his back until he turned the corner. And even when he knew that she could no longer see him, he felt her presence like a plague in his body.

"Get back to your customers," Joseph ordered his clerks, and flicked the dust off his trousers with his hands. His necktie had come undone and he drew it tight under his collar. He smoothed his hair and wiped the dust and perspiration off his face. "Where's Daisy? Tell her to get back to the cash register. Where does she think she is, standing like that out on the sidewalk? Call her back there, you—I mean you. I'm not paying you to look at me. . . ." He turned to the customer who had been trying on the suit. "That's brothers for you," and he forced a weak, wretched smile. "That guy was my brother. . . . Would you believe it? . . . I want you to excuse me, friend. How's the fit?" And he began pressing his agile, nervous hands down the back of the coat, patting the collar, the shoulders. "You couldn't get a better-looking suit made to order." Already he had forgotten David. Once more he was intensely concentrated in the suit, the customer, the necessity of making a sale. "Turn around. See how it lays in the back?"

The customer was embarrassed; he tried to interest himself in the suit, but all the time he kept thinking of the two brothers, one like a great, enraged animal, the other like a gnat, restless, spasmodic. "Kind of bad tempered, that brother of yours, ain't he? Hurt you? He's bigger'n you. But you put up a great battle. How much is the suit? . . . Yaa, I'll take it. It's a good thing your wife separated the both o' you. Plucky woman, Mrs. Singermann. . . . How are you, Mrs. Singermann? Thirty-five dollars. Yaa. My wife kept pesterin' me to get a suit, an' now I got one, an'

I hope she's satisfied. . . . You said it! They always want you to be dolled up like a million dollars. Say! That brother-in-law o' yours, he ain't to be trifled with. . . . Hit your husband a nasty one. I just stood there. I'm neutral. Ha! Ha! Naw, I wasn't a bit inconvenienced, Mrs. Singermann. Just forget about it. Them boys they're just like the old man. I used to do all my buyin' across the street until Joe opened this place. Always liked Joe to wait on me. He treats me square. But I like the old man. He's a proper old devil. The boys is just like him. Once they get mad! . . . Thanks, Mrs. Singermann. I will come in again, thanks. You got my whole pay roll, now. Ha! Some fight that was. . . ."

David strode along back to the synagogue. It was growing dark now. The smelter smokestack south of the town was lifting its plume of fire into the sky, as though the devil were lying in there on his back breathing defiance to the heavens. There was a hard, vicious beauty about it, unconscious and unpremeditated. David lifted his eyes to this burning splendor, but its beauty was a blankness in his mind. He had that sadness in him, that deep loathing of himself and of everyone. What a fight that had been! What ever made him do it? What was the use of it all? He should never have gone to the store. If Joseph wanted to keep open on *Yom Kippur,* if he were sinning, why he'd be punished, that's all. Sinning! thought David bitterly. What did sinning have to do with it? They were getting the money while all the other Jewish stores were closed tighter than drums. They were too damn smart. Well, he'd got one on the nose just the same. Maybe it'll teach him a lesson. "I'll never speak to you again." Well, Mrs. Daisy Singermann, I should worry whether you do or whether you don't.

David's thoughts ran on: That woman! She's the cause of it all. If only she'd be decent and let somebody else have a chance . . . the greedy snake. . . . Aw, I guess I shouldn't

have hit him. The way my hand looked on his face. . . . He's not so strong. What did she mean when she said that some day I'd be in a fix? What's she pokin' her nose . . . aw, I shouldn't have hit him. But what the hell? What right has he to keep his store open on *Yom Kippur* when it is the law to fast and pray?

It was dark when he reached the synagogue and he could see the dim light within reflected through the colored glass. There were a hundred or more voices raised in that piercing, agonizing song so full of blood and tears. They were singing *Kol Nidre*. David stood out there in the darkness and a peace came over him, a quietness. If that piercing, ecstatic song, broken by deep sobs, significant pauses, could go on forever! But the song ends, thought David. The song ends and prayers are forgotten, and you struggle blindly and work yourself to the bone. . . . And at night you seek diversion in those dives, those cheap cribs. Where is *Kol Nidre* then? Where are the thoughts of Moses, Abraham, and Solomon?

And David turned into the synagogue. And the candlelight was soft and kindly to his eyes.

SIX: RACHEL

The girl who passed in and out of the Singermann household day after day, who had been graduated from the High School with honors, was as a being apart from the rest of the family. There had always been Rachel in the house, occupying the best bedroom, coming in late to breakfast, entertaining at parties. There was her own particular kind of perfume that hung about the rooms, there was her hat here on the dresser, her soft gloves with the slender fingers here on the piano. She was a Singermann, a sister to Joseph and Louis and David and the others, yet somehow she had never partaken of their struggles, she was not a combatant in their quarrels. Each brother would come home at the end of the day, and his eyes would look about naturally for souvenirs of her presence, a bit of ribbon, a hairpin, a belt buckle. There might be a bitterness remaining from some protracted quarrel in the store; there might be a deathly fatigue like a heavy cloak bearing down upon the shoulders; but if Rachel were in the house, there was a bit of consolation, a soft, dim radiance that lit a dark interior, wistfully and with fragrance.

Since she was the only girl in the family, she bore about her head an aura of strangeness, somehow foreign and extraordinary. She was loved, and yet not one of the brothers ever told her so, definitely, or with any kind of demonstrative affection. Louis, who was most susceptible to women, would come home and sniff at the atmosphere as if trying to catch her through his nostrils. If he did not see her hat or her gloves, he would pace through one room after the other; and finding her absent, he would call to his mother,

or whoever happened to be within earshot, "Where's Rachel tonight? Isn't Rachel here?" No, she was out with a friend; she wouldn't be home until late. Louis would try to look indifferent about it; David would inquire, what friend? And wasn't she out last night? These girls, nowadays. They were always out. . . . Moses would look moody and address tart remarks to everyone at table. He, too, loved Rachel. She was so strange to him, a young Rebecca, and yet not Rebecca after all, because he did not control his daughter's destiny. He spoke to her firmly enough. He told her that she must not do this and the other thing, and she always answered obediently, if with some abstraction. And yet, he knew that she was not really listening to him. He knew that she had slipped through his fingers like a butterfly and had fluttered away . . . somewhere he could not follow.

Moses dressed so carelessly; his trousers always hung down over his hips in a sloppy manner. His hat was always covered with dust. And the sons did not dress up for work, only for "sporting." But Rachel seemed always to be dressed for an event. Her mother experienced difficulties in obtaining a weekly allowance from Moses, but Rachel, apparently, had no trouble at all. Rebecca had never seen her husband pass out money to his daughter; it was a procedure hung about with silken draperies of secrecy and tactfulness. But there it was. Rachel always had enough money to buy a new suit, a dress, a silk waist with elaborate trimmings and bits of lace. Her shoes looked new; the heels were never worn down on one side as Rebecca's were; her stockings were silk and extraordinarily free of "runs." Somehow she always managed a flower in the buttonhole of her suit; somehow, her hair was always fixed neatly with a part in the middle like a boy's. You would have thought that all these appurtenances to her well-being and appearance would have called forth discussion, argument, vocal misunder-

standings. Everyone else in the family quarreled; there was always dissension over something or other. Yet about Rachel there was a circle of calm, of tranquillity. She had very little to say; she always got what she wanted; there didn't seem to be a ripple in the serenity of her existence. How strange! The boys looked for her always. It often occurred to them that there was something remarkable about the fact that she was their sister. There was such a solid *maleness* in the house that she did not seem to belong.

She did not have the beauty that her mother had possessed when young. Rachel's nose was a trifle too long and her underlip was rather heavy and drooping, like her father's. She had a soft pallid skin that took on color in two crimson spots when she was embarrassed or agitated. You expected these spots and knew just where to look for them, on the very points of her cheek bones. Her hair was coal-black, coarser than Rebecca's, not nearly so exotic, so deeply tropical; yet Rachel managed it so cleverly, with such precision that people always spoke of it as one of her best "points." Her eyes, however, were alluring without qualification. They were dark brown, long, with an Oriental slant about them, and were set off with complete success by long black eyebrows. She was fairly tall, but her figure was not at all voluptuous in the Jewish manner. It was straight, boyish, and her feet were long and competent looking. She was full of odd contrasts, implied rather than articulately forthcoming. Some called her beautiful. Others said she was dull and uninteresting.

Young men thought Rachel cold and felt uncomfortably inferior in her presence. Their egoism suffered, and they complained that she made them feel "small." They could not perceive the fine lights and shades in her character; they could not realize that she was a dreamer, often torn and anguished by deep desires and passions. The Singermann

vividness of sensuality was present in her, as it was in her brothers, but unlike them, her inner emotions did not appear readily on the surface. It was unfortunate for her that this should be so, for the majority of men, particularly Jews, prefer women who show, outwardly, a richness of varied feelings and emotions.

For over three years, Sam Straller had been calling on her regularly, taking her out to the theater, to dances and outings. Sam was in charge of the printing presses in one of the local newspaper offices. He had to do a good deal with machinery, bolts, nuts, revolving wheels, type, dynamos, and such things. His fingers were always inky at the tips and his nails were dirty and broken. He had a habit of sucking in breath through his front teeth. Whenever he was particularly animated or excited, this habit was magnified, persistent. A rush of words would issue from his mouth, and then he would pause to suck in breath through his teeth. It was annoying at first, but those who knew Sam well forgot about it. It was as much a part of him as his small clipped mustache and his crisp, running walk. He never approached you as do most people. Rather, you saw him at a distance, and then, almost unbelievably, he had rushed over an amazing intervening space and was before you. Many spoke of him as being a "good boy, steady and reliable." He was all these things, oppressively.

The Singermanns thought that Rachel ought to do better than Sam, but they did not actually discourage his courtship. He was a Roumanian like themselves, and this was in his favor. Though they often ridiculed his mannerisms, they were not unmindful of his good qualities, his steadiness, his energy, his thriftiness. Not that Sam was a big money maker. His salary was but thirty-five dollars a week, ten of which he sent regularly to his old mother who still lived in Roumania. "He's a good son," was Rebecca's comment; and as she spoke she could not help wondering whether, if

she were alone in Roumania, her sons would send her money. She doubted it.

The Singermanns hoped, secretly, that Rachel would find a better man, a handsomer, more romantic figure than Sam. Moses, who had a peculiar dislike of small men, was far more open in his disparagement of the suitor. *"Er is vie a klaner hint,"* scowled Moses, watching Sam depart with Rachel one evening. Moses owned a sharply observing eye that loved to see objects in caricature; but he was not far wrong in seeing Sam as a small dog, an eager, agile spaniel. The contrast between Rachel and her young man was far from becoming. She was tall, slim and boyish, and her stride, the swing of her shoulders was forward, frank, and wholesome. Trotting at her side, a dog-like adoration illuminating his eyes, Sam looked, too obviously, her inferior in breeding and character.

She was bored with him, deeply, nervously bored, but she was too kind to tell him so. And then, too, she was beginning to worry about men—why were they not more attentive to her, the right kind of men? She was twenty-three now, and all her life she had been dreaming of colorful, tempestuous affairs of the heart. She was a great reader of fiction, both good and bad, and she had ideals of what lovers should be like. They ought to be tall and broad of shoulder, either extremely temperamental or manly. She felt sure that she would know him when he came along, by his eyes, his voice, his walk. He would love her deeply, but not too extravagantly, and she would follow him to the ends of the earth. People might think her placid, cool, self-contained, but they did not know! She could love fiercely when the time came. She would give her heart, her body, her soul. Just what her lover asked, she would give.

Sam often took her out to Columbia Gardens on Saturday afternoons. She prepared the lunch, and they went out into

the woods and ate their sandwiches and sat together under the trees. Together, and yet alone. While Sam talked to her, his words catapulting out of his mouth, she would lean against a tree and look up at the sky and dream; or she would sit engrossed in a novel, reading about that other man she had never met, who must be waiting for her somewhere.

"I could never understand people who read books," Sam said, and then paused to suck in breath. "It takes a lot of patience, and I ain't got no patience. Oh, once in a while I like to read a good adventure story. I like mysteries. I like murders. What's that book you got?"

"Trilby," answered Rachel without looking up.

"I don't see what you can find in a book like that," Sam rushed on breathlessly. "About a lot of artists in Paris, ain't it? And there's a hypnotist in it. Now that part of it is int'resting, I guess. But all that other stuff. . . . They say that to be an author you got to be part crazy. There's a fellow down to the plant who knew a author once. He says this author used to drink like a fish and he was always a month behind in his room rent. One day he got so drunk he started to tear down the chandelier in his room. Crazy, he was. Now he's in the insane asylum. He thinks he's a chandelier and he goes around asking people to put him on. He means, put on the lights. . . . I guess if you write long enough you go crazy, sure enough. All that patience . . ." And Sam sucked his teeth luxuriously.

Rachel looked at him and frowned. She lifted her eyes off the print of the book and tore her mind and emotions away from the Left Bank where Trilby had posed. It was painful for Rachel to wrench her heart out of Paris, out of the studios where Trilby, in that raucous voice of hers, had sung, *Don't you remember sweet Alice, Ben Bolt?* while the sinister Svengali had played the accompaniment. It was painful to take leave of Little Billee, so neat and dapper, with

his black hair, his slim hips, his fine, precise English. His apparition floated between herself and Sam—Sam with his inky fingers and uncouth manners. For a moment, she shuddered. There was dandruff in Sam's brown hair, and particles had fallen down on his coat collar. Why couldn't he be more careful of himself that way? If she didn't look out she'd have dandruff, too, and it was hard enough to keep your hair healthy in this high, dry altitude.

"I wish I knew an author . . . or somebody," she said harshly. "I wish papa had never come here. What is there here? Who knows anything? Sometimes . . . I wish I was any place but here. Oh, no, I don't want a sandwich!" She rose to her feet and started down the gravel path that led out of the woods. He quickly gathered together the food that he had spread at her feet and started running after her like a dog who has just picked up a stick thrown him by his master. As he ran, the sandwiches in the bag plopped up and down, the glasses in his pocket jangled, the spoons and knives and forks clattered. In his excitement, the wind carried his hat away through the underbrush, and he gave chase, casting worried glances over his shoulder as he ran. He wiped the dust off his hat carefully and then darted after Rachel again. He caught up with her at last and trotted happily at her side. She was such a fine girl, so healthy, so big! He loved bigger people than himself. He thought that if you were born tall, you were born, somehow, a part of God.

"What was you saying, Rachel?" he asked, his words tumbling over one another.

"Why should authors be crazier than anybody else? Why should they be crazier than you or me? I know a lot of business men who are crazy."

"I didn't mean that they were all crazy," he explained, trying hard to keep up with her. She had such fine long legs, and they were so well shaped, so firm. "There was just this

one man I was telling you about who thought he was a chandelier. . . ."

"Oh——!" and she looked at him with disgust. "Your garter is showing." And yet she stopped to wait for him until he had fixed it. "You ought to wear real garters and not arm bands," she said when he was walking beside her again. "You can't expect those things to hold up your socks."

"I'm forgetful that way," he apologized. "Every morning I tell myself, I'll get me a pair of garters. But I always forget. There's so much work to do. There's always something coming up at the plant. Today the ceiling fell in. Right down on the presses. The boss comes in and blames me. Why am I to blame if he don't spend any money on the place? You should try to be a little patient with me, Rachel." His face was red with emotion; beads of perspiration formed on the bridge of his nose and dropped down on his mustache. "Rachel, I'd like to tell you something. It'll only take a minute of your time. . . ."

She knew instinctively that he was going to propose to her, and her heart sank as though weighed down by lead. "A minute of your time . . ." just as a salesman would try to interest her in a hat or a buckle. "A minute of your time . . ." She wanted to strike him as he stood there, his hat pushed ludicrously to one side of his head, his pockets bulging with glasses and knives and forks. She wanted to push him backward until he lost his balance, and it required a good deal of self-control to master the impulse. How he cringed before her! Don't look at me that way! Rachel wanted to cry out. Can't you stand on both your feet like a man? And please wipe the sweat off your mouth. . . .

"I wanted to ask you, Rachel, if you wouldn't——" But she had torn her hand from his grasp and was walking rapidly away from him, and she could hear the jangle of the glasses, the plop-plop of the sandwiches as he followed. "Not

now, Sam!" she pleaded. "Some other time, but not now!" She was almost crying as she went on ahead of him through the shaded, narrow aisles of Columbia Gardens. Another moment and he would have proposed to her. He would have told her that he wanted her to be his wife, a sacred question, a question she had always thought of as embroidered by the bright threads of romance. When that right man came, he would not ask for "a minute of your time." She would know what he wanted by the look in his eyes. There would be a sudden magic in the moment drawing them together. There would be an illumination of every sense in her body, her veins would run fire. . . . She continued to run on ahead until she reached the trolley-car platform. There she waited for Sam to join her. He bought the tickets and sat down in the car beside her.

"Why did you run away from me like that, Rachel?" he asked her as they came within sight of the copper mines that stood on the hill overlooking the city. "It don't seem like you care for me very much," he sighed.

She felt sorry for him, realizing his sincerity, his steadiness, his desire to please her. "But I do like you, Sam," she said. She turned her eyes on him. "It isn't that I don't like you."

"But do you like some other man better?" he asked in his quick, rushing way. "You know, when you come to think of it, there ain't many men who make as good a living as I do. There's very few men who know newspaper machinery as well as me. I got a little money in the bank. I got my health. And I'm even-tempered. I can see both sides of an argument. I admit I ain't got much of an education. I never had many advantages. My mother was poor——"

"But I do like you, Sam," she said, touching the outlines of nervous hysteria. "I do like you, very much."

"You're sure there ain't someone you like better?"

"Oh, no," she answered wearily. "Please don't talk so much. Everyone in the car can hear you. There's nobody else. I wish to God there were."

"Why, Rachel," he said sadly, "that's not a nice thing to say."

David was enormously self-satisfied these days. He had taken to smoking cigars and he had joined the Elks. He came home one evening and showed Rachel the big Elk's tooth that hung suspended from his watch-chain. He pressed the charm between his fingers lovingly. "It's a real elk's tooth," he said. "Say, that's a swell lodge. I wouldn't belong to any other. They can have their benefits and their high degrees. I want to live in this world, not the next. We're having a big banquet tonight, and tomorrow there's going to be a parade. All the Elks from over the state will be marching in line. You want to watch me, Rachel, don't you? Stand on the corner of Park and Main Streets. You'll see me behind the Silver Bow banner." He showed her proudly his parade uniform and the small gold elk's head fixed in his coat lapel. "Did you ever see any animal with a head as graceful as that?" he asked, and it was obvious that he was repeating a phrase he had overheard.

The next day the streets were thronged with people. Purple and white banners were hung from office windows and floated from telegraph poles and car-line wires. The Elks looked very superior and clannish in their white trousers with purple stripes. On the sleeves of their white silk shirts they wore purple arm bands. The Elks owned the town and carried canes tied with bows of purple and white ribbon. The ordinary population of Silver Bow looked on enviously and with awe. But the Elks took no notice of them and sang songs and joked with their fellow members. As Rachel walked along the streets, the Elks winked at her and showed off before her. She stopped at the corner of Park and Main

Streets to await the beginning of the parade. She was really bored by it all; these men in their white pants with their silly little canes were like children playing a mischievous game. She wondered why David had joined the Elks instead of taking a trip to Yellowstone Park or the Grand Canyon of the Colorado. And there was California where a horse and buggy could drive right through the trunk of a redwood tree.

Crowds of curious spectators had begun marching up and down the sidewalks, and Rachel found herself being pressed back from the curb against the window of the shop behind her. She had just about decided to turn towards her father's store where the view of the paraders would be better, when she looked into the window of the shop. It was a barber shop and Rachel saw that there were four chairs, at present unoccupied. But the barbers, in their starched white coats, stood on tiptoe, attempting to get a view of the street. She regarded them casually, and her eyes stopped at the tallest of the four. She saw that he wore his stiff white jacket with an air. He had a beautiful head, and for a moment she was reminded of the statue of the discus thrower in the High School. The barber's eyes were long golden-brown, his nose was aristocratic with sensitive, upward-curving nostrils, and his hair was wavy brown, luxuriant and shining. She could not take her eyes off him as he stood there, straight and tall. What graceful hands, and fingers. . . . Rachel lost herself for a time, and she forgot about the Elks and the crowd. A sturdy, vigorous brass band was playing, *Hail, Hail, The Gang's All Here* and the beat of the drum, the loud blare of the cornet, roused the moments into high adventure. Yet the music was only a subconscious accompaniment to the image of this man standing there like a statue, slightly contemptuous, almost unbearably magnetic. Rachel tried to tear herself away, but the crowd pressed her closer against the window. She discovered that the barber was staring at her

with a slight smile turning up the corners of his long, full-lipped mouth.

It was only this pane of glass that separated them, a fraction of an inch in thickness; and it occurred to her that this was a transparent wall that stood between her and that romance she had been dreaming of her whole life long. With one blow she could shatter the glass, but her hand would bleed. . . .

The parade had commenced and the crowd surged and battled its way to the curb, so that she was free to go wherever she desired. Suddenly, she was afraid; the barber had nodded to her and was moving towards the door. She turned her head away quickly and started down the street. Perhaps if she looked back once she could see him again; but she dared not. He would take it as an obvious invitation, think her one of the girls from Down the Line. She did not want him to think about her in that way.

That evening when David asked her if she had seen him in the parade, she had to answer, yes. He would have been hurt if she had told him the truth. How could she say that at the moment he was passing the corner of Park and Main Streets, her thoughts and emotions, her senses were concentrated on a barber whose head was like that of the discus thrower in the High School?

She passed that corner nearly every day on her way to and from the store. It was the busiest corner in town, and there were so many people that Rachel was often irritated because they blotted out her view of him. But many times she saw him bending over a chair, clipping hair off a man's head or passing a razor over a face that was masked by a lather of shaving soap. Always he was neat and solicitous; it was as though his crisp jacket was neatly laundered every day; as though his temper was never ruffled in the slightest. Sometimes he would glance up from his work just in time to

catch her eye, and he would remain upright, looking after her until she had passed from view.

It got so that she often imagined herself in his chair, while he bent over her. If she had only been a man, she would have gone into this barber shop and sat in the first chair. But would she have been able to bear the touch of his hands, the casual feel of his jacket? Sometimes, she would walk along the street and she had left her body behind there in the shop. She lay relaxed in the chair while he bent over her, his long, tapering fingers caressing her face, her scalp. She had seen him bend down close when he was shaving a man and whisper something into the man's ear. How could she have borne that close proximity of his face, his breath forming dreadful words in her ears?

She became dull, abstracted. In the morning she awoke as though from a drugged sleep and gazed into the mirror, wondering, Can this be me? No, it is some other person I do not know very well. "I am ashamed of you," she would say to her reflection in the mirror. "You are a sinful creature whose thoughts are of lust and the body and long tapering fingers. I know you are a sinful creature. All night you have been lying with a man, kissing him, caressing his long body. Shame! Shame! What would your father say if he knew? You are in love with a barber. *Pfah!* A barber of all people! His hands are probably stinking of hair lotions and face creams, and he gets all that hair over him."

"I don't know what's the matter with Rachel these days. *Vie geschloofen is ze,*" said Rebecca. "Maybe she had a fight with Sam. He's such a good, steady boy. Every week he sends home money to his mother in Roumania."

"Oh, that boob," said Louis contemptuously. "I don't see how she can stand him. He doesn't know enough to wipe his nose, that boob."

"Maybe you would send me money if I was living alone

in Roumania?" Rebecca asked him tartly. "Not you! On the *shiksas,* the Gentile girls, you would spend it."

Rachel came into the room and the conversation was halted. "Rachel, you ain't looking so well lately," said Rebecca. "Don't you sleep, maybe? You didn't find any bedbugs, did you, Rachel?" Whenever one of her children looked ill, Rebecca feared that bedbugs were in the house. On that one subject she was slightly out of her mind. Hell, for her, would be rows of beds, one after the other, stretching into infinity, each bed alive with bugs.

"There, you got 'em again," scoffed Rachel. "I haven't seen a bedbug since I've been in this house. It's the awful air," she muttered. "If I could only get away to a lower altitude, to the sea . . . if I could only go where there aren't copper mines and smoke and smelters. . . ."

Louis looked at her sympathetically. "Why don't you buy a new waist, Rachel?" he asked. "They've got some beauties at Symons'. This Irish lace. You don't wear enough bright colors. You're so dark, you'd look fine in red. . . ."

"You and your colors, mama and her bedbugs," said Rachel disconsolately. "Don't you ever think of anything else? Oh, please, don't talk to me this morning. I'm so tired. I didn't sleep well."

"What you need, Rachel, is a little diversion," Louis suggested. "You ought to meet more young people instead of reading books all the time. It wouldn't be so bad if you'd read something besides fiction. That book I have on modern French painting now. I read it until three o'clock this morning . . . instead of those cheap love stories you read."

"Listen to the critic!" cried Rachel wearily.

"Why don't you come out to Columbia Gardens with me some time and dance?" he inquired. "I'll introduce you to some nice fellows."

"Nice fellows? Are you sure they're nice?" she asked sardonically.

"The trouble with you, Rachel, is that you're too much with Sam Straller," Louis continued. "He's dead from the neck up, that guy. Come out to the Gardens and I'll introduce you to Leonard Bergaman. Leonard's a damn nice boy just arrived here from Minneapolis. And I was talking to this barber fellow the other day, Boris Romanovitch, and he was complaining he didn't know any young girls."

They seated themselves at the breakfast table and Mary O'Brien came in with bowls of oatmeal. Rachel crumbled some bread between her fingers. Boris Romanovitch . . . so that was his name. "What a silly name!" she said aloud. But the effort caused her pain.

"You don't need to make fun of him," said Louis pouring cream over his oatmeal. "He's a swell-looking fellow, I think."

"Swell," mocked Rachel, but she could not eat, and the table seemed to be swirling around her.

"That fellow is a good barber," Louis was saying. "I hardly feel it, he shaves me so easy. He's Russian, you know. He talks English with a funny accent—you'd know he wasn't born here."

"These Russians, they ain't to be trusted," Rebecca said suddenly. "They change from one minute to the next."

"Well, anyway, it will be an experience to meet a man I can't trust," said Rachel smiling at her mother. But the sound of her own voice was queer in her ears, and she suddenly wanted to run off into her own room and cry.

A few evenings later Louis escorted Rachel out to the dance pavilion at Columbia Gardens. It took an hour by trolley car to get from the town to the Gardens; and during that hour, Rachel's heart was pounding furiously, until she felt that the other passengers must be listening and secretly laughing at her.

As the long "open car" hurled itself through the darkness,

Rachel felt herself rushing forward to some obscure fate life had always meant for her. She loved to ride, to move forward swiftly. Her spirit was like a long thin scarf she wore, caught and lifted by the wind. The flickering lights out there in the darkness, small houses set far apart in an emptiness of space, were all conspirators in her new life. How strange that only a few weeks ago, everything that she had seen and done had been unrelieved, unilluminated by any color or delight! And now, it was as if she were new-born, as if she had flung off her old body and stepped within a new, younger and more beautiful. She thought that it would not really matter whether or not Romanovitch liked her or was drawn to her. Their meeting might be a failure; he might talk to her and pass on uninterested. Still she would be changed, for she would have spoken to him, held his hand, felt him closer than ever before.

This cool night air rushing past her ears, this fragrance as of burning wood, a pine tree aflame on the mountainside! Plunge, rock through the night, my electric steed, my trolley car operated by the Silver Bow Street Railway Company! Rachel wished, for a moment, that the car might never arrive in Columbia Gardens, so that eternally she might be riding forth to greet Romance, eternally trembling upon the brink of some fateful mystery.

The dance pavilion was a huge place, almost a whole city block in length, and the orchestra occupied a platform at one end. From the rafters hung a number of gaily colored Chinese lanterns. When the orchestra played a waltz, the unshaded lights were dimmed so that the lanterns shed a soft, sentimental illumination upon the dancers below. Louis led Rachel out on the slippery floor and they danced together. They had scarcely concluded when Louis caught sight of Boris Romanovitch. He waved gaily at the barber who was at the other end of the hall. The surge and beat of the orchestra were suddenly deafening to Rachel; the notes of the

music were tiny black hammers beating upon her head, her heart, and limbs. Or again, the music was a wave that caught and lifted her and then receded, leaving her to drift.

He stood before her, regarding her out of his long, sculptured eyes; and he was rather like a little boy who is too chivalrous to take advantage of someone he does not know very well. She noticed how his body was bent slightly forward from the hips, an attitude familiar to her from the many novels she had read, familiar and yet startling. One hand was on his hip, and she saw how his finger nails gleamed, as though polished too brightly.

"Rachel, this is Mr. Romanovitch," Louis was saying. "If he can dance as good as he can shave . . ."

The barber laughed a hidden, cool laugh, as if he were amused within, as if he feared that laughing outright would spoil an attitude he had taken. Rachel felt her hand in his and was astonished that everything was as before. The music should have stopped, the dancers evaporated into thin air.

"This is my sister," said Louis, then left them together and sought out a girl he knew. Rachel wanted to call Louis back, for she was afraid. Louis should have understood; he should not have left her alone with this man. If he had been just an ordinary man, she would have been composed; but he was extraordinary, a desire long felt, suddenly materialized. His materialization was somehow frightful.

"Will you dance?" asked Boris, and almost without thinking, she placed herself in his arms. They drifted off to some measure that Rachel had danced to many times; yet she had never danced to it before. She felt awkward, stiff, and she wondered whether her partner realized that she was not such a bad dancer as she seemed to be. The closeness of his body, the movements of his muscles were painful to her. She wanted to escape from him, to run away with just the thought that she had met him.

"I have seen you many times." He had a peculiar and ap-

pealing habit of accenting certain wrong syllables. "You pass by my shop and I wonder who can this be? Now I know and I am so glad she is Rachel Singermann!"

"It must be when I go to my father's store," she said. She did not know what to say to him, though she had been rehearsing speeches for days. Her mind was crowded with things she wanted to say, but they were so tightly packed that it was impossible to move them, to get them flowing freely in words. How stupid he must think her!

The first half of the dance came to an end; he did not clap his hands, but held her firmly as if afraid that she would fly away from him. He was strange and foreign. No other man in the hall would have held her like this in an embarrassing embrace. She looked wildly about her to see if others noticed the strange way he kept hold of her, but no one seemed to notice. She felt relieved and knew that she would dance more gracefully from now on.

The music resumed; he held her more closely and she gave way to him. She smelled some kind of scent on his coat lapel that was pleasing. She ceased to think of anything; she forgot that there were things she wanted to say. She was fluid, a stream that he directed in whichever channel he desired. After a moment he seemed to be carrying her; she was unconscious of feet, of everything but that she was in his arms in an eternal waltz. When the music stopped she looked up startled. She had thought herself alone with him, and here they were surrounded by people, by laughter and conversation.

"I think it would be nice to go out and take a walk," he suggested. "What I miss mostly in this town is the fresh air —you know? We will go for a walk and then we will sit down somewheres. Are you pleased? Would you care to do this?" And he pressed her arm slightly.

"All right," she said, and allowed him to guide her to the entrance and out on the spacious veranda. They descended

the steps to the gravel path that led into the woods. It was early autumn; the evening was cool, but not uncomfortably so, and there was a quarter moon in the sky. "You are a Russian, Miss Singermann?"

"No. My father and mother came from Roumania. But maybe further back . . . I don't know. I don't know about my family very far back."

He steered her along with his arm as though she were incapable of movement without his guidance. "You must pardon me in my English. I know I get certain accents wrong. I have not been in this country very long. I come from St. Petersburg." He looked mournful and shrugged his shoulders. "I do not like to think of the past. It is very bitter to me."

She looked up at him. "Why?" she asked.

"What a bitterness comes into my heart!" he exclaimed looking into the darkness, as though he had not heard her. Then he seemed to realize that she had spoken to him. "Did you say something? Do you mind if I light a cigarette? Are you sure you don't mind?"

"I asked you why the past was bitter to you." She was beginning to feel at ease with him, and now she wanted to know all about his life. She wanted to know everything about him, he was so strange to her, so foreign. He was like an actor on the stage who had picked her out of the audience and forced her into the drama.

"Oh, I beg your pardon! I didn't catch—are you sure you would like to hear? I can be very tiresome!" And he laughed his secret, inner laugh that had so fascinated her. They found a bench and seated themselves. "Will you be cold?" he asked solicitously. "If you think you will be cold we can resume—continue our promenade. So. Tell me if you are not comfortable. It is so unusual to be out under the trees like this. Look, how the leaves sing! I remember the last time . . . my mother . . ." He groaned. "Ah, the bitterness of it! My

mother . . . let me look at you, Miss Singermann. Turn your face the slightest bit . . . Ah! Ah! Not so much, please, to one side. So. I catch, so it seems to me, a fleeting, just a fleeting resemblance to my dear mother."

Rachel did not know what to say. She thought that she had never met a kindlier, more solicitous man. Of course, there was that something queer about him, as though he were always acting, but it was a quality that added to his charm. It was more than she had ever expected, to be sitting so close to him like this, on a bench, under the trees.

"Just that pose," he resumed, "and I am reminded of my days in St. Petersburg when I was a student. I was so ambitious in those days!" He chuckled in an offhand, invisible manner. " 'You work so hard, Boris,' my mother used to say, 'one would think you were studying to be a *Zadik,* a learned rabbi.' My dear mother's words, just as if she was now sitting beside me." Romanovitch fell silent and looked at his patent leather shoes that gleamed brightly in the moonlight. "Poor mother, if she knew that I was a barber she would turn over in her grave!" He spoke so dramatically that Rachel was startled. "A barber! Think of it! I who was one of the most brilliant students in the—in the—University of St. Petersburg. A barber! How my old friends would laugh if they knew! There was Semyon Borodin. Semyon and I—" Boris interlocked his long fingers—"so close. We went to the university together. His father was a government magistrate, a favorite to the Czar, himself! Think of it, what I have come to. Are you cold, Miss Singermann? Am I boring you? Shall we resume our promenade?"

"No," she said. "Don't bother about me. I'm interested in what you were saying."

"Are you, really and truly?" He laughed as if he were greatly relieved by her interest. "Well, you are a most delightful listener. But to proceed. Here I was a student in the University of Moscow—"

"But you said St. Petersburg, I thought. . . . Excuse me for interrupting," she said shyly.

"St. Petersburg! Of course! My mind . . . Can you imagine . . . I am so sorry! I beg of you, Miss Singermann, to excuse me. May I light a cigarette? You're sure you don't mind? I'll try so hard not to blow smoke in your face. However. To proceed. My family lived in a village of perhaps three, four hundred people. Every month my check arrived. On the dot. Never a day late if I may say so. I was a king. What did I lack? Nothing! A fur coat I had . . . cost over a thousand roubles . . . suits . . . boots . . . a king! Friends. On the shelves, bottles of wine imported from France. The professors would call in my rooms to pass the hour. We would sip a glass of champagne together. 'Oh, here is Boris Romanovitch!' they would say. 'He can tell us how to solve the riddles of the universe! He can tell us much about philosophy!' Boris this and Boris that. I tell you! . . . May I call you Rachel! Miss Singermann is so . . . so . . . cold and distant!" He shivered playfully and waved his patent leather shoes. "We will be friends and so it must not be Miss Singermann, Mr. Romanovitch. Are you amazed? Please, do not think I am taking too much on myself!"

"I'm sure I don't mind," said Rachel. "If you care to call me by my first name, I'm sure I wouldn't mind. And if I don't mind, well—well—" And she looked confused.

"Oh, you're so . . . charming!" he cried, seizing her hands. "Oh, you are perfectly adorable! You are so unassuming, you know? So unassuming. However. To proceed. I was a king! I had rooms not far from the palace. An entrée into the best houses. . . . Think, a Jew! . . . Waiters bowed to me when I came into restaurants. Tips! Tips! I threw money away! Are you being chilly, Rachel?" He placed his arm about her. "So. You are more comfortable now, I hope. Listen to the music from the . . . dance hall. How it sobs! How it cries out to my heart! It was just such a night when

the news came." He suddenly removed his arm and clenched his hands miserably. "The awful news. The terrible news. How can I tell you?" And he looked at her beseechingly out of his long eyes.

"What happened? What happened?"

"My beloved mother! My honored father! They were—murdered," he whispered. "They were butchered in a pogrom. A pogrom! The Cossacks rode into the village—handsome fellows!—and they butchered the Jews. Not one did they spare. Not one! Even the children. . . ." Boris Romanovitch sobbed. He could not speak and Rachel was in despair.

"I'm so sorry—Boris," she said at last.

"You are very sympathetic," he resumed after a pause. "You have a good heart. From the first moment I saw you, I said to myself, 'That girl she has a good heart.' It was something that I saw in your eyes, in the way you carried yourself. *An Eedish hartz is basser vie a Goy's.* If you will only be kind to me, Rachel, it will make me so happy!"

She lay back on the bench and closed her eyes. She thought that she had never felt so happy as she did at this moment. Often she had dreamed of the time when she would meet her lover; in certain dreaming moments of her life she had pictured the meeting, and every detail was sweet to her mind. Many times he had come to her; but never in her dreams had he appeared like this to tell her of his bitter past when he was a student in the University of St. Petersburg.

"When you found that your father and mother were dead, what did you do then?"

"Consider, Rachel," he said sadly. "All my money was gone and my father's fortune was stolen from him. I had to go away from the university where I was so happy; and I took a room in the poor part of the city where the rent was small. Many days I did not have enough money to eat. But I cannot tell you, Rachel. It would make you cry salt tears."

"Oh, no," she said fiercely. "I want to know all about it. Please tell me, Boris."

"Oh, you have such a good heart! You are young and still you understand so much! But if I speak too sadly, you must stop me. I had to pawn all the beautiful furniture my mother bought me the day we came to St. Petersburg together. We had gone to the finest shops and picked out chairs, a table, a bed. All fine old things. And a samovar, a gift from my aunt, I had to pawn that. And a pair of silver candlesticks, and all my Hebrew books. The pawnbroker, I can see him now, a greedy old man with his faded beard from drinking soup. *Pfah!* It makes me sick to think of it! He paid me very little and I never had the money to redeem all those beautiful, beautiful things. There was a watch that belonged to my father, and a cameo that was my mother's. *Oi, finster is mir!* If I could see that cameo on your white throat, Rachel! Soon, all my money was gone. My clothes were in rags. I was six weeks behind in my rent, and I was ashamed to look the landlady in the face. She was a cruel one who hated our race. She said if she was Czarina, she would cut off the noses of all the Jews in Russia and melt them into grease, for then they would be of some use to the Christians. Ah, the she-devil of a landlady!"

"May she roast in Hell," said Rachel in Yiddish.

"One day, my old friend, Semyon Borodin, saw me on the street. His father was a magistrate and well acquainted with the Czar, mind you! 'But my old friend!' Semyon called to me. 'We meet under miserable circumstances, my friend. But let me help you!' I threw myself into Semyon's arms and I cried, and I cried until all my strength had gone out of my body. Poor scarecrow that I was, with not even warm underclothing to keep the cold away. I would have fallen there in the street, by the river, but Semyon held me close and warmed me. . . ."

"Nabach," murmured Rachel.

"'Look, Boris Romanovitch,' said Semyon. 'I cannot bear to see you in such circumstances, we who were always so jolly together! I have a big allowance from my father and you must allow me to lend you enough to go to America. I have read much of the blessings of Democracy, and I have relatives there who will help you. My dear old friend, my dear companion!'

"'Do you think I would take your money, my virtuous brother?' I said to him. 'No, you are too good. There is not another one in Russia, from the Czar down, who is so good as you!'

"We wept together there in the cold street and our tears were frozen on our cheeks. Semyon would not listen when I refused to take his favors. He bought me warm clothing and boots of the best quality. He took me to the best restaurant in St. Petersburg and fed me until I laughed again. 'I will go to America, Semyon,' I said with tears in my eyes, 'but I will never forget your kindness to my dying day.'

"The next week he took me to the train and we embraced for the last time. 'God be with you, little brother!' I called to him. 'The God of the Jews watch over you and make you to lie down in green pastures!' Semyon cried after me.

"It was two years ago when I arrived in New York, a magnificent—Oh, a magnificent city! But with no heart. There it was I learned the barber trade. I am oppressed when I think back on my youth. For was I not a king? Did I not possess the world? . . . And now you know the story of the poor barber."

"You shouldn't be ashamed," said Rachel. "You have a fine shop, and my brother tells me that you do a good business. Believe me, you are better off here than you were in Russia, starving, eating your landlady's insults."

"Rachel, my sweet one," and Boris leaned closer to her. She closed her eyes and was overcome by her desire for him. His body against hers, the warmth of his breath, the beating

of his heart numbed her into sensual acquiescence. He kissed her again and again, and each kiss was a link in the chain that bound her to him.

One evening, two weeks later, Moses was seated in front of the stove in the dining room, a glass of hot tea in his hand. It was cold outdoors, winter having arrived prematurely. Montana weather is treacherous and impatient. The streets were covered with snow and the windows were stiffened with a white coating of frost. And despite the weather, Moses could see that Rachel was preparing to go out. She was drawing rubbers over her shoes and there was a fur piece about her neck.

"Where you going, Rachel? Ain't it too cold to go outside on such a night? You will freeze your hands off. *Bist maschuga?*"

"Papa, it isn't so cold. I've got to meet somebody." She stamped her shoes into the rubbers and turned towards the door.

"It's that barber, Romanovitch. Don't think I was born yesterday. Rachel, sit down. *Ech vill raden zu dir.* I don't trust that fellow. Maybe it's something in his eyes, or maybe it's his mouth. I don't know. Anyway, I don't trust him. You shouldn't be too ready to throw yourself on him."

Rachel grew stiff with self-consciousness. Her cheek bones glowed like two red cherries. Every muscle of her body seemed to stiffen as though she had made up her mind that nothing her father might say would penetrate her outer defenses. "He's a good man. I won't hear anything against him," she said stubbornly.

Moses had never lost his temper with Rachel, and now he regarded her with pity in his eyes, as if he understood her better than his sons. "Always he is ready to say something—talk, talk, talk, and if you ask me, I don't know from what he talks. One minute he talks like the Czar was his father.

The next minute he wants me to lend him five hundred dollars for improvements on his barber shop. 'Don't talk so fast, mister,' I told him. 'Five hundred dollars is not five cents.' Can you tell me what a barber should want with five hundred dollars? A pair of scissors and a razor ain't that expensive. And if you should ask me, I will tell you he's a four-flusher," and Moses took a gulp of his tea.

"All right," said Rachel tensely. "And now I must go. If you're going to insult Mr. Romanovitch——"

"Sit down, Rachel. He'll wait for you. Sit down. Don't hold yourself so cheap. He won't get a girl like you every day, that barber. He has a nice face, but is there something underneath? For my own part I wouldn't care so much for the face if there was sense in the head. A man with sense, he don't have to be a barber these days. No, sir."

"Is clothing the only respectable business in the world?" asked Rachel angrily. "I don't see that we're all so rich——"

"It ain't a question from money," said Moses, placing his empty glass on the table. "Did I ever say to you, 'Rachel, go and get a man from plenty of money'? Did you ever hear me say such a thing? Take the man you like. But first be sure he's got the goods. This man, Romanovitch, he don't seem right to me. He's like a man in a storybook, *vehst?* He's all right on the pages, but to live with such a one ain't no laughing matter. What do you know about him, *hoh?* Where is he from? Who was his father?"

"He's from St. Petersburg," explained Rachel, restraining her impatience. "He told me his father was a very rich man, only he was killed in a pogrom and the money was stolen. They were very educated people, not like us, believe me. I'm tired of always listening to the same talk, day after day. Always socks, shoes, business, business. Boris has a fine mind, I tell you." When she had finished, Rachel found it difficult to refrain from bursting into tears. Since her first

meeting with Boris, she was nervous and bad-tempered when she was not in his company.

"What's this?" asked Rebecca, coming into the room. She was followed by Louis and David who had just finished their supper after working late at the store. Rebecca seated herself on the other side of the stove and started sewing at one of Michael's nightgowns. "What you tired from, Rachel?" asked her mother.

"Ask papa. He thinks we're the only Jews in this town that have any sense. I was just asking him, who we are? What right have we to criticize other people?"

"She wants to go out with this barber, this Russian feller, who, if you ask me, is nothing but a cheap actor."

"He's not! He's not!" cried Rachel. "If you can't be nice about it, I won't listen! I won't listen!" And she clapped her hands over her ears while the tears rolled down her cheeks. "I—won't listen!" she sobbed.

"From what I hear, he's a fine man," said Rebecca consolingly. She turned on Moses in a rage. *"Vus radst di zu ihr?* A young girl like she is! Let her be in peace!"

"Oh, go back to your dishes!" Moses reprimanded his wife. "You don't know nothing, not even how to cook a dinner. I tell her something and she should listen. It's for her own good."

"What's the matter with you people?" asked David. "You act like you was all crazy." He was on his way to a meeting of the Elks and he wore a high stiff collar that was causing him considerable pain.

"It's this barber," said Rebecca. "He's a nice boy, no? Everybody speaks from him like he was a *gelernter mensch.* Mrs. Bachmann tells me he can read the *Torah* from beginning to end. His father was a *Zadik* in Russia who was killed by the Cossacks."

"Oh, you mean that humbug, Romanovitch?" asked David. "I don't think much of that guy. Always talkin' about

how much he knows and what he's going to do some day. If you ask me, I don't trust him. I wouldn't trust him around the block."

Rachel looked up at her brother, and there was a glazed expression of fury in her eyes. "He's too good for you," she said. "He's too good for any of us."

"The trouble with you is"—and David looked down at her patronizingly—"you've gone crazy over this guy and you think he's the only man in the world. Why, ask anybody in this town about him. Nobody trusts him. He owes Shilling for a box of cigars he got last Christmas and hasn't paid for yet. He tried to get into the Elks and was blackballed. You're in love with a guy who's not worth it."

"And what if I am?" Rachel buried her face in her hands. She could hardly bear it. In another moment she felt that she would rise and fly at them and tear their eyes out. "What if I am in love with him?" she said, her words scarcely audible. "Just wait till you fall in love. Just wait! Oh, just wait!"

"What you crying about, Rachel?" asked Louis. "What's she crying about? What's got into her?" He could not bear seeing Rachel in pain.

"You mind your own business, Louis!" called Rebecca from her rocking-chair. "All of you mind your own business!" The room was slightly mad with that anger of swift words so characteristic of Jewish families. Quiet peace flings itself into violent argument almost before the participants are aware of the change. Rebecca was a part of the room's madness, and her desire to end it only added to the strain of the quarrel. "I don't want to hear any more!" she cried. "A silence on all of you!"

"Who's fighting?" asked Louis. "I'm not fighting. I come in here and I see everybody's mad. I ask a simple question. That's all it is, a simple question."

"Oh, she's crazy about this barber, Romanovitch," ex-

plained David. "They think so much of him in this town that they blackballed him from the Elks."

"Well, what's the matter with Romanovitch?" asked Louis, his eyes blazing. "He's a swell fellow. If you ask me, he's too good for the Elks. Who are the Elks, anyway? They don't make my living."

"I won't listen," whispered Rachel. "You're torturing me. Please! Please!"

"Say, keep the Elks out of this," David warned his brother. "It might make a man of you if you belonged. You might forget some of them chippies you dance with out to Columbia Gardens. I'd like to see you get in the Elks. You're not good enough."

"Ah, tell it to Sweeney," and Louis waved an angry hand. "That ain't no lodge, the Elks. The Masons. . . . They're somebody. . . . Why don't you leave the poor girl alone? Why do you pick on her? She's not married yet. But she couldn't find a better man than Romanovitch. He's a swell-looking fellow, and he's educated. He was at a university in the Old Country. Do you think they're like universities in America? And he's a damn good barber."

"Who wants a barber in the family?" growled Moses. "A girl like her should be able to marry the finest man in Silver Bow, not a cheap barber. A man what cuts your hair and shaves your face. *Pfah!* Is this a business for a man?"

"Oh, leave her alone! She's not a fool!" Louis answered his father sharply.

"Silence!" thundered Moses, rising to his feet. "Since when are you the boss in my place?"

"Louis introduced her to Romanovitch," said David. "He's the one who introduced them. Well, now see what you've done."

"Oh, stop! Stop! I won't listen!" called Rachel. She rose to her feet swiftly and ran to the door, slamming it after her. They heard her departing footsteps in the snow. Re-

becca flung the door open again, and called after her, "Rachel! Rachel! Come back, you foolish girl!" But Rachel was out of hearing.

The snowflakes were large and moist; Rachel saw how they danced like butterflies as they fell across the radiance shed by the street arc lights. She had always loved snowflakes drifting slowly through the air, particularly at night when they touched her face so lightly, a cool but sweet caress. She loved cool weather, northern places where the air is thin and stimulating as champagne. It was all very well to be carried away by stories that had their setting in the tropic, heavy-lidded South; but you could never live in those places for long, could you? Your heart always turned back to the cold, active North with its icy stars and its hard-packed snow that made a harsh, chirring sound under the weight of steel-rimmed wheels. . . . And if your lover came out of the North, your hard, thin lover with his fine, clean-cut grace, how could you ever wish for the South, how could you want to be in a soft, voluptuous place with the air weighed down by sunlight and blossoms?

Oh, the soft, whirling flakes dancing down upon her! Each one is a kiss from Boris! . . . How sentimental I am. . . . But everyone in love must be sentimental, silly, insane. Partly insane, anyway. . . . Her father and her brothers, how could they know what was in her heart? Telling her this and that and the other thing. Telling her that Boris wasn't good enough. What difference did that make? You never really fall in love with someone who's good enough for you. Those people are always so terribly uninteresting. . . . Oh, I will catch the snowflakes as they fall and press them to my warm lips, and they will melt like kisses. I will dance in the snow, the white, white snow, clean and cool from the clouds. . . . Of course he's not good enough for me. That's why I love him. He's not stupid. But he's a humbug, a four-flusher.

David is right. Don't I know my lover? How weak he is! What a liar! How he loves to impress me! All those stories about the university in St. Petersburg. . . . My father, my mother, my friends, the Czar . . . Oh, how I love him! I love his weaknesses. I will take his weakness to my breast. I will place his dear, dear head on my breast and I will feel his uneven breath on my body. . . . Oh, how vile I am! How vile, how happy! O beautiful snowflakes, like white butterflies dancing through the dark air! How many miles have you come down? How does the world look from the edge of a cloud?

Rachel passed into the brilliant part of town where the electric signs blazed and the department stores were illuminated. People passed with their heads lowered, their collars up, as if fearing a little snow, a little cold. Hold up your heads! Look at me! I'm in love! Oh, listen, listen, listen! I'm in love! Do you know what love is, you people all hunched up within yourselves, afraid of a little air, a little freezing temperature? Do you realize that I'm in love with Boris Romanovitch, the barber? If you did, you would not walk past so heedlessly, so dismally, steeped, buried, smothered in your dull ignorance.

Rachel walked along towards the rooming house where Boris lived, and saw Sam Straller approaching. She made out his gait, his small legs leaping forward, covering yards with a few movements. He was just leaving the newspaper office where he oiled machinery all day. His fingers were probably black with ink, and his thoughts were all of his work, of the money he was saving. Poor Sam! He was one of those men . . . you know . . . one of those earth men who never fly along like a snowflake. If I were to tell Sam my thoughts he'd look at me as if I were crazy. That's because his emotions are all taped up.

He was not aware of her passing him in the street, this woman so much a part of his tightly coiled life. A devilish

impulse made her shout after him, "Oh, Sam!" and he stopped abruptly, as if her voice had cut sharply through his outer drabness, into the very heart and center of the force that kept him alive. He stopped and saw her, a nymph materialized out of a snowflake. Her face was pale, but her eyes were brilliant, devouring him, laughing at him mercilessly. "Sam, you didn't see me! Oh, Sam!"

"Rachel, for the Lord's sake . . . Is it you? What a night, huh? What are you doing up town, all alone?"

He didn't know that she was in love with a god. A weak god, but then all gods are weak. You had to be in love to find that out. Poor Sam! She stood there in the falling snow, regarding him with such a saucy impudence, taking stock of his every insipid quality, his innumerable drearinesses, and she laughed aloud. He was just a pint-sized dullard. He was good to his mother. Pint-sized dullards are always good to their mothers. Because she was in love, she could look down upon him as from a mountain-top; she could tear him to pieces with a cruel unconcern. Love made you mighty and strong. Who are these poor dogs who cringe and whine through the streets, being good to their mothers? What do they know about love and passion and the snowflakes like white butterflies drifting through the air?

"Isn't it a glorious evening?" Rachel asked, and heard her own voice as a chime through the snow-white air.

"I'll walk you home, Rachel," he said coming up to her, adoring her with his moist eyes. "A girl like you shouldn't be out alone like this, this time of night. Curfew's rung!" He sucked his teeth, delighted by his own witticism. "You bad girl!" he said.

"I'm not going home, Sam. . . . I'm going to see my lover!"

"Hah! That's a good one, Rachel. You say some funny things, sometimes. Aw, come on. I'll walk you home."

"That's a good one, Sam. But I'll tell you what you can

do. Walk me up to my lover's room and wait outside for me!" She whirled about like a dancer, and she was so graceful that people stopped to look at her, lifting their eyes from the snow-covered pavements. Then they saw her smile and were afraid. Well, it was none of their business if she was drunk.

"You shouldn't say those things to me, Rachel," said Sam, and he shivered in the cold. "You treat me like I was a . . . dog. . . . Saying a thing like that to me. . . ."

"Well, I meant it." Her fit of hysteric happiness was beginning to pass as abruptly as it had come upon her. A moment before she could have kissed Sam, playing with his inadequacy; but now a bitterness was creeping over her, and her cruelty had lost its ecstatic mask. "You . . ." she began, regarding him with contempt. "Why, you're the nastiest, dirtiest man I ever saw. You cheap . . . and you had the nerve to think that I'd marry you."

She turned away from him, hurrying down the street. And he stood there, his hands in his overcoat pockets, his shoulders hunched, the butt of wind and snow, like a stray dog that will freeze in the streets. The snow drifted over his shoes, up his trouser legs. The flakes melted on his eyelids, on his ridiculous mustache. The snow on the brim of his hat turned to water and dripped down on his nose. He stood there, and stood there, and stood there, and passers-by wondered, What's got into him, anyway?

She took a positive delight in being stared at by the janitor of the building where Boris had his room. She could tell by a single glance that he was a respectable married man, a member of the Baptist Church. Why Baptist? Well, they're usually respectable married men, aren't they? Oh! These are the stairs against which the balls of his feet are pressed so many times a day . . . in the morning . . . in the night. He leans on these banisters for support. If I pass my hands

over the woodwork now, will I feel him? O blessed, blessed power that instilled passion in my veins. . . .

She knocked on the door. If he were out . . . she trembled there on the landing, and was overcome by a spell of futility. It occurred to her by what a slender thread our lives are held up above the yawning chasm of nothing, just nothing. If the thread should snap, I would be hurled down, down into that chasm, that nothing. I would die down there, impotent, helpless; the sun would bleach my bones, my heart would become a piece of dried leather. Maggots would crawl by the thousands through my body.

The door opened. A wave of smoke rushed over her, fragrant tobacco smoke through which, dimly, she discerned his presence, eager, pointing towards her like a knife. Whenever I'm with him, it's as though he's cutting me into pieces with the blade of his beauty. He drew at her hands, almost pulling her into the room. She saw the couch in one corner covered by a mellow tapestry, and the figure of a woman was woven in it, a woman for him to cover with his clever limbs. On the wall were photographs: a man with a long beard . . . his father? A woman with wide, sad eyes, wearing on her cropped head the wig that Jewish wives in Europe take on the day of their marriage. She must be his mother, for his eyes are sad in just the same way, and he has her long, sensitive mouth. And in another corner of the room was a great bronze samovar. He must have lugged that all the way from Russia. What other nationality would keep a thing so sacred? A samovar to a Russian is the Frenchman's patriotism, the nun's crucifix. Those packages of cigarettes, and those burned twisted stubs all over the floor. My love is untidy. It is a part of the pattern of his weakness.

"Oh, my Rachel!" he murmured, drawing her into his arms and kissing her repeatedly, her eyes, her nose, her lips, her chin, her hands. He was infernally clever that way. It was a part of his foreignness. They knew how to love

women. It was a part of their education to learn. They weren't sticks who looked at you, and when they kissed, blundered somehow. "And now you are warm, Rachel. My body is warm."

She began to cry on his shoulder. "I had to come to you," she said brokenly. "The whole family was talking about you tonight, and they talked and talked until I thought I'd go crazy. They don't like you, Boris. They think you're a humbug. They don't think you're good enough for me."

He stepped back and she felt that they were parted and could never be together again. She damned herself for saying everything that was in her mind. She had hurt him. She could see by the way his mouth drooped and his eyes flickered. He didn't like to be called a humbug. Naturally, no one wants to be reminded of the worst.

"Oh, but I love you, Boris, and so what does it matter what anybody says?" She wouldn't let him go. She'd hold on to him, fiercely. If she lost him . . . but that was too awful to think about. "I love you, Boris."

"So I'm a humbug?" he said coldly, so coldly that she thought she would die. There were always these things coming between people who loved one another, these moments of futility, frustration. "Well, if your family thinks that way about me . . . I am extremely sad . . . I am hurt, Rachel. Hurt, here." And he placed his hand over his heart.

"Don't . . . don't say those things," she murmured passionately, and embraced him, lifting herself to meet his lips. "What difference does it make so long as you have me?" she asked. "Don't mind them. Oh, don't. . . . I came all the way here in the snow. Do you like snow, Boris? But you must. In your country . . . And on the way I met that Sam Straller. . . ." She was trying desperately to win her way back to him.

His face lit up. "Oh, that fellow!" And he laughed until the tears came into his eyes. "What a fellow. *Vie a katz is er!*"

"And I told him that I had a lover . . . but I didn't say who. What a nice room you have! It's so warm and comfortable here. And what a curious bedspread."

"It was my mother's," said Boris. "Everywhere I go, I take it. It's very old."

"But I'm jealous of the woman," she laughed. "A woman on your bed, covering you like that. And such a pretty woman. Who is it?"

"It's Ruth. You remember, Rachel . . . *whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.* . . . Sit down, Rachel. Give me your hat . . . and your gloves. I'll take off your rubbers. Poor frozen feet walking such a long way in the snow! Lie back, Rachel. Lie back. It's so good to see you here, in my own room. The room was strange, strange before you came." And he rested his head on her bosom.

She passed her fingers through his hair. "There are forty-seven stairs from the pavement to this room. I was afraid you wouldn't be in. I knocked, and for a minute there wasn't any answer. What were you doing, Boris? . . . You know the feeling of expecting something wonderful that doesn't happen? It's as if you were hanging on to a cord, and it breaks and you fall, fall. There's a gray hair in your head, Boris. Two of them. But I'll leave them stay. I wouldn't want you changed."

He passed his arm about her and held her tightly. "Are you warm now, my darling?"

"Don't let's talk."

"Shall I put out the light?"

"Yes."

And when he had returned to her, she said in a low voice, "I used to read books. But they're so silly. What do they know? It's all so different. They never say anything. Why, they couldn't, could they, Boris? You can't write about certain things."

"Ah, but the Russians, they can write. Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, Turgenev . . ."

"I never have read one of them, Boris. We're not a cultured family. I'm really ashamed, sometimes. I hope one of my younger brothers will go to college. And you know my mother can't even read or write."

"I love you. Now you are like Ruth . . . *Entreat me not to leave thee . . .*"

"And even if you were a humbug, I'd love you. . . . Ah, don't get up. Stay by me. I promise not to talk any more."

They lay close to one another on the couch and sometimes murmured in very low voices. After a time, they felt the chill of early morning in the room. "What time is it, Boris?"

He rose unsteadily to his feet and fumbled for his watch. "Half past three." He lit a cigarette.

She sat up nervously. "I must go home."

He threw the cigarette away and sank down on his knees in front of her pressing his head into her lap. "Don't go home," he pleaded softly. "Stay with me now. Stay . . . I'm so lonely, Rachel . . . Do you know how dreary life can be, alone, in the morning? Stay with me, *mon zeesa.* I couldn't bear it if you should go."

"Well, what should I do?" she said as if to herself.

He got up and went to the window. He lifted the shade. "Look, how it's snowing! It's deep. You could never go home. Not a car to be seen, not a carriage."

"And papa will probably terrify me." She looked at him with wet eyes. "We could get married."

"Tomorrow!" he cried in his sudden, dramatic way. "As soon as the sun rises!" He came towards her quickly and an inaudible music seemed to release itself from his limbs. She was caught up by that music and imprisoned away from reason. "Stay, Rachel," he murmured. "Ah, stay. It's such a night for love. My wife . . . The snow is deep. . . ."

SEVEN: RACHEL AND BORIS

Thirteen months later in November, Boris and Rachel Romanovitch sat at breakfast in the tiny sitting room of their thirty-five dollar a month flat in West Silver Street. Rachel sat facing the window that looked out on a back fence stiff and harsh with a coating of ice. Despite the fact that it was November, a curious and unseasonable springlike fragrance hung about the walls and roofs of Silver Bow, and that wistful, anachronistic gesture of spring had crept into Rachel's home. On one side of the room was a door, now partly ajar, that led into the "kitchenette," barely large enough for the gas stove and refrigerator it contained. One of the circular burners of the stove showed a blue flame, turned low because gas was expensive in Silver Bow; and above the flame was a coffee pot that gurgled and steamed and was pleasantly odorous.

"And what are you thinking about?" asked Boris, looking up over his coffee cup. His face was cleanly shaven, clear and firm as though he had slept well and dreamlessly. He looked so boyish and handsome that Rachel could not help feeling a thrill of wonderment, even after a year. She remembered her first impression of him as he had stood behind the window of his shop that day of the Elks' parade. He had seemed to her like a Greek statue, so white, so cleanly cut; and now that she had become terribly intimate with him, he had not changed to her eyes.

Rachel was in her dressing gown. It was of rose-colored silk and was very becoming to her. She was fond of bright colors and soft materials; though when she had been unmarried, living in the Singermann house, she had always

appeared at breakfast fully dressed. Her father thought negligees unbecoming to Jewish girls. It made a woman look "fast" he used to say. A silk dressing gown gave the household an atmosphere of laziness, indolence, qualities in a woman that Moses could not abide. But for several months now, in her own flat, Rachel had been indulging her love for soft, clinging materials—though Boris was so poor she could not afford more than two. The other was orange and Louis had selected it for her.

"I was thinking," said Rachel, "of Louis—how he loves delicate things and how miserable he is working for papa in the store. Only last week he told me that he's going away one of these days. He'd like to see Chicago and New York. And what do you think? Maybe even Europe."

But Louis was merely a figure on the outskirts of Rachel's mind. In the very heart of her brain was a really wonderful thought, a marvelous piece of news that she was saving up to tell her husband. She had first heard it the afternoon before when she had been downtown. She had gone to see Dr. Schwartz and he had told her that she was going to have a child. Coming out of the doctor's office, Rachel had felt like running along the street, dancing and laughing. There had been a high-pitched reckless ecstasy in her that night when the snowflakes had fluttered down from the dark heavens and she had come to Boris's room; and now it was an ecstasy again, not quite so mad, simpler somehow and more human. The first ecstasy had been joined in her mind to snowflakes; this new ecstasy was joined to spring, even though the season was still far off, to the queerly poignant fragrance in the air, and the way the snow clung to the fence, its stale virginity awaiting the warm, thrusting caress of the sun. The winter would at length melt away, and spring, a young girl in a soft, billowing dress would dance along the streets of the world. Last night, Rachel had waited for Boris to come home so that she could say what the doctor

had told her; but Boris had been so tired and fretful that she thought she would wait until this morning. And here it was just the kind of morning to talk about it.

"And what do you think, Boris? I have a great surprise for you. I'm just burning to tell you. Oh, just wait till I tell you!"

He rose from his side of the table and came over to her, standing behind her chair and placing his arms about her shoulders. It was wonderful how happy they were, all things considered. They were poor. The shop did well enough, but the Union compelled Boris to pay such high salaries to the barbers that there wasn't much to show for it. And Moses had shut himself away from them. Not that he didn't speak. He and Rebecca had come to see them and they had talked in a calm, familiar way; but it was plain that Moses Singermann had no great respect for his son-in-law. Rachel could see that her father did not trust Boris, and she was angry about it. What difference could it make to Moses if Boris proved untrustworthy? She would be the one to suffer, not her father. Well, that was the orthodox streak in him, clinging fiercely to an idea, frozen with that idea and unwilling to melt under the warmth of his daughter's affection.

That was Moses Singermann all over. He was estranged from Joseph and Daisy; he disapproved of Rachel's marriage; he thought Louis would be sure, if given his own way, to go to the dogs; he fought long and earnestly with David over what seemed trivial details; he thought Sol stupid and uncouth; he thought Harry weak. He had even frightened young Michael, who was just beginning to feel his way in the world. Rachel admired her father in many ways; his rocklike strength and contrasting impetuosity often fascinated her; but she could never love him.

Why, it had been plain to her from the very beginning that Boris had no great strength of character. What did she know of this husband of hers, after all? She had quickly

discovered that he was evasive about his past. She had long ago come to the conclusion that he was a liar. Part of what he had told her about his youth in Russia was true; the greater part was false. Well, what of it? He was her husband. She loved him passionately, and his faults were for her to judge, not for her father or anyone else in the world.

"Come, come, Rachel," he said now. "What was it you were going to tell me, *mein liebchen?* I'm late as it is."

"Listen, I—"

There was a long ring at the outer doorbell that cut like a sharp-pointed spear through Rachel's voice.

"Who can it be at this hour of the morning?" asked Boris petulantly. He moved away from Rachel and she heard him opening the door that led into the hall. There was a silence after he had opened the door, and then a woman's voice. "Oh, Boris, I thought you'd be gone by this time. Is Rachel home?" Rachel turned about in her chair so that she was looking straight at Daisy when her sister-in-law entered the room. It was quite unexpected, this visit of Daisy's. Joseph's wife had been in the flat once before, immediately after Rachel's marriage. Since then, by the way she was greeted on the street by her sister-in-law, Rachel had come to believe that Daisy not only disapproved of Boris, but that she had actually a deep contempt for him. No wonder that Rachel was astonished at this early morning visit. She looked uncomfortable and then a trifle irritated. She had so wanted to tell Boris about the baby. She hastened out into the corridor where Boris was getting into his coat, but he had time only for a quick kiss. There was a questioning look in his eyes, as if he wanted to say, What does *she* want? He could not very well have spoken this question out loud since Daisy was just beyond in the small living room. "Good-by, Daisy!" he called, and was out of the door, running down the stairs.

"I'll come to the shop this afternoon and tell you!" Rachel called after her husband.

"What did you say?" he called back from the bottom of the stairs.

"This afternoon . . . I'll be down town!" she cried. She was so disappointed that the tears started in her eyes.

"All right!" he shouted back.

Rachel shut the door and turned back into the living room where Daisy was waiting for her. Joseph's wife was no longer the slender girl who had been the belle of the charity ball. Her figure was plump, and her features had thickened so that they looked as though they had been melted under a warm fire. There was that quality about her eyes and mouth which marks a woman as being definitely detached from a life of domesticity. The shrewdness of her hard blue eyes, at the corners of which crows' feet were deepening, gave her away as a schemer, avaricious and too grossly clever. Her costume was garish and of that style which is just ahead of the prevailing mode, but the materials were not of the best quality. The buckles on her slippers might have been worn by an inferior musical comedy actress, and her stockings, gray silk, were far ahead of their time; but since her legs had fattened, the stockings were not becoming. Rachel had the impression that she was in the same room with a great, overfed leech; but the moment the thought entered her head, she attempted to stamp it down as unworthy and unfair. She would have given a good deal to possess just a bit of Daisy's cleverness. Here Joseph had been in business for himself only a short time, and already his store was doing the biggest business on East Park Street. That was all Daisy's doing, Rachel concluded. She had "made" her husband a business man that many envied; and though the other Singermanns were agreed that Joseph's home life was nonexistent, they could not but speak highly of Daisy's business acumen. Her Christian Science activities had aroused only hatred in the family; yet Rachel had no word of criticism for her sister-in-law's departure from the

Jewish faith. Rachel could not see what good Daisy would have been as a member of the *Shule,* when her Bible was Mary Baker Eddy.

"Are you surprised, dear?" asked Daisy, kissing Rachel's cheek with a resounding smack. Daisy with her "dears" and strenuous gestures of affection! How Rachel loathed that side of her character! Like the other Singermanns, Rachel was chary of embraces and kisses where those outside her immediate household were concerned; yet Daisy had been known to go forth and kiss one of her best customers, a lady who purchased a hundred dollars' worth of merchandise at a call. "And why not?" Daisy answered her husband when he criticized her demonstration. "She's a woman I've known for years and she's a member of the Church. It ain't wrong to show love, Joe. That's what God put us on earth for."

"Why, Daisy, it's so rarely I see you," said Rachel, offering her sister-in-law a chair. "Aren't you busy down at the store?"

"Well, we'll be busy tomorrow," said Daisy, smoothing out her dress so that a wave of perfume settled in the atmosphere. She stretched out her limbs to show Rachel that her feet and ankles were still small and graceful. Daisy was extremely proud of her small feet, though they did not seem capable of carrying the weight of her body. Between these two women there had always existed a rivalry, implied rather than outspoken. Daisy was several years older, but she had always been the prettier of the two until she had gained flesh. Her gaiety and easy manners had always drawn men, whereas Rachel with her novels and brooding had cooled masculine ardor. But that was all in the past. Marriage had worked its subtle transformation in the two women, spiritualizing Rachel, coarsening Daisy.

"It was a little quiet in the store and I thought I'd run over for a few minutes," explained Daisy.

"Well, I certainly appreciate it, Daisy," said Rachel.

"Wouldn't you like some coffee and toast? We're sort of small eaters . . ." she apologized.

"Is it too much trouble, Rachel, dear?" asked Daisy, coming closer to the table. "I know I'm a pig. But like I'm always telling Joe, 'Good food never hurts you.' He don't eat enough a day to feed a bird. 'How do you expect to be cheerful on what you eat?' I'm always asking him. *Er is vie a schtick.*"

"Yes, Joe always was thin," said Rachel, and wondered why Daisy had come to see her.

"Rachel, I'd give anything to make coffee as good as you can make it. But then, you always was a good cook and I had to worry about other things. I tell you, being a woman in business ain't no snap, either. And that wild man of mine always buying, buying, buying, and pushing the bills in his back pocket so I won't see them." Daisy sighed and took a gulp of coffee that Rachel had poured for her. "Well, what I wanted to ask you, Rachel, is, do you know a Mrs. Roth?"

Rachel looked at her sister-in-law blankly. "Mrs. Roth? No. Why?"

"I thought I'd tell you about this woman that came in the store yesterday. A very plain woman who looked half starved with a five-year-old little girl she was leading by the hand. She said she was looking for you and wanted to know where you lived. So I told her." Daisy's eyes seemed to narrow into sharp blue points.

"She hasn't been here, Daisy. Mrs. Roth, you say? I don't know any Mrs. Roth that has a little girl. Is she a Silver Bow woman?"

"That's the int'resting part of it. You see, dear, she said she'd just got off the train that she'd been traveling on all the way from New York—not even stopping off except to change at Chicago. She said she'd heard that we was related and that's why she came to me first." Daisy's teeth

crunched a piece of toast. "That's a pretty negligee you have on, Rachel. Where'd you get it?"

"What?" asked Rachel absently. "Oh—Louis got it for me. Do you like it? Mrs. Roth . . . I'm sure I don't know why she should want to see me."

"Maybe she's some relative of your husband's," suggested Daisy, her mouth working with aggressive and highly pleasurable movements of mastication. "Poor little woman. I feel so sorry for her."

"Why?"

"She looked like she had seen hard times. She was so thin and the bones showed through her cheeks. I guess there was something the matter with her lungs."

"Oh, I know!" And Rachel laughed suddenly as though from great relief. "The ladies from the *Shule* must have sent her. She's probably looking for charity. The poor thing! Will she be here this morning, do you think, Daisy? I have an old coat I can give her, you remember that old coat I bought two years ago at Symons'. It's nothing but *schmotiss,* now—rags."

"The nerve of these department stores in this town!" And Daisy took an indignant bite out of a piece of toast. Crunch-crunch-crunch went her sharp, white teeth. "That same coat I could have got you from Peabody Brothers in St. Paul for just half the price you paid for it. I tell you, Rachel, travel's broadened me. You get to spot materials with a look when you go through some of these wholesale houses. What you should do, dear, is to give me a list of the things you want, and I can put your order through for you at a big savings."

"I'd appreciate that, Daisy. I surely would." But Rachel was thinking that she would never buy her clothes from wholesalers. Experience had taught her that you never got the things you wanted when you did not select them on the spot. Look at Daisy. The colors she wore were ugly and the

pattern looked flamboyant and cheap. And Daisy was what you would call a rich woman.

"Oh, my God, is it eleven o'clock already?" asked Daisy, rising from the table. A shower of crumbs fell from her lap to the floor, and again that heavy wave of perfume swept the room. "That husband o' mine 'll kill me for comin' in so late. You see, Rachel, it's this way. When I'm there he makes off he don't want me and I'm a nuisance. All day he grumbles and fusses and looks daggers at me. 'Who wants you around here? Why don't you stay home?' All day the same thing. But when I ain't there, you bet he misses his old woman." Daisy swept into the hallway, still talking with great animation and Rachel followed her, listening politely. "Well, let me know about this Mrs. Roth, will you, dear?" asked Daisy with a somewhat too casual air. She started walking down the stairs, slowly, ponderously. "Beautiful weather, ain't it, Rachel? This morning I got up and I inhaled like anything. This summer I'm going to fix me and the kiddie a tent in the back yard. He's goin' to be a fresh air fiend like his mama." Plop-plop-plop, Daisy's slippers hit the stairs. "When you coming out to see me, Rachel?" she called out from the bottom of the stairs.

"I'll try to be over soon," Rachel answered back.

"You shouldn't be such a stranger!" Daisy called, halfway out of the street door. "Oh, it's glorious out here. Just glorious! It makes you feel like a million dollars. Good-by, Rachel. Take care of yourself, dear."

"Good-by, Daisy!" Rachel, holding her dressing gown closely about her, ran back into the flat, shivering with the cool draught that had blown up the stairs. She brought out a broom and dustpan from the kitchenette and set about sweeping up the crumbs near the table. "Mrs. Roth. . . ." she murmured. "Daisy's going to be an awfully fat woman if she doesn't look out. . . . She's got plenty of money in the bank, I bet . . . Joe doesn't know what she sticks away

in her socks. . . . Those stockings must be expensive. . . . They look terrible on her. . . . Wonder why she came here and talked about that Mrs. Roth?"

She turned into the bedroom where she surveyed herself in the mirror of the dressing table. A strand of her black hair had come loose and hung low over her eyes. She brushed it back with one arm so that the sleeve of her gown fell back and revealed the rosy tint of her elbow. She felt rather tired and lay down on the bed to rest for a time. It was the same bedspread that had covered the couch in Boris' room when he had lived alone. She remembered that he had brought the tapestry from Russia and that he had said he would never part with it. "I must have a woman always," had been his explanation, and Rachel had wondered whether he was joking. She turned on one side so that her cheek was against that of the figure in the tapestry. *Entreat me not to leave thee; for whither thou goest I will go.* At first it had seemed so strange to have a bedspread like this; but now Rachel was accustomed to the figure and liked to feel that it was here, always looking up at her.

She closed her eyes and dozed off for a few minutes; but it was too slovenly of her to lie in bed like this with all the world in motion about her. Besides, in another few months, there would be more bed in her life than ever before. Rachel tried to remember how her mother had acted when another baby was coming. It was extraordinary, the courage that Rebecca had shown on these occasions. She had suffered so, yet she had gone about her daily tasks without complaint, cooking, scrubbing, cleaning, sewing. Rachel felt that she loved her mother intensely, more than any other person in the world, Boris excepted. Rebecca had brought seven children into the world and had been imprisoned within seven beds of Hell, but she was by no means a physical wreck and there were still fire and vitality in her. How soft her skin is, thought Rachel, and how deep, how lovely her eyes are.

She was such a beautiful girl. I don't think my father ever appreciated her enough. Men turn you inside out, but they never really see you clearly. Their minds won't follow their eyes because they're always thinking about themselves. A man is like a baby when you give it your breast. The baby isn't thinking of the pain he's causing you, but only of the milk he wants in his stomach. Rachel began to think of the guests she would ask to the *Bris* if her child were a boy. Mr. and Mrs. Bachmann, of course. David was going around quite a lot with Lina Bachmann these days. Well, Lina was a sweet girl, and David couldn't do better. . . .

Here I am, wasting away the whole morning, thought Rachel, and I haven't even told Boris the news yet. She stepped to the floor and felt a sharp stab of pain as if something had turned upside down in her body. "Is that my little baby?" she wondered aloud. She removed her negligee and began dressing slowly. It didn't seem possible that she was bearing this child of Boris', this seed of a strange Russian. Why, wasn't it only yesterday that she had met him for the first time in the dance pavilion at Columbia Gardens?

Fully dressed, Rachel began drawing on her gloves in front of the mirror. She had just snapped the button on her wrist when the doorbell rang; and the sound, like an electric wire, shocked every nerve in her body. She was astonished at the pallor of her reflection in the mirror. Or was it a freak of the light? It had certainly grown darker outdoors. These November days in Montana were not kin to one another, but had escaped from other months in the year. You wakened in the spring, but the day grew old and winter slipped back before you were aware of the change.

The doorbell had not rung again. Should she answer? What a strange thing, to ring the bell and then go away. . . . Or was someone waiting there, behind the door? Rachel grew cold with fear. Well, it might be the man who

read the meter, and she was such a fool. Was it the coming child that made her so sensitive? She turned towards the door, and when she placed her hand on the knob she knew who was waiting out there. It was undoubtedly that Mrs. Roth. That woman with the weak lungs. It must be her, thought Rachel. I know it's her. If I just stand here without making a movement, she'll go away, and perhaps I won't ever see her again. She stood still and the fear was upon her, so that she had an odd impression of her hair floating away from her head. There was a rustle behind the door, a slight cough. Rachel turned the knob.

The woman who stood in the hallway was extremely frail and tawdry looking. Although the day was cool enough for a coat she wore only her shabby suit, a rusty black stuff, threadbare and unsubstantial. She seemed to have no breasts or hips, just as though she were a fragment of a human being who had fallen away into disuse and neglect. Her hands were rough and blue with the cold, and she kept tugging at a button that had come loose on her jacket. Her face was small, oval in shape; but despite her pallor and meagerness, the woman must have been pretty in a quaint, demure way at one time. Her eyes were large and gray, but they were ruined by inflammation; and there was an expression of horror in them, a horror that had raced into them and been imprisoned forever. The woman coughed and said, "Are you Mrs. Romanovitch?" Her voice was dull, as though it had been wrenched up out of her chest and choked into a lifeless stupor.

"Yes," answered Rachel wonderingly. "Come in."

The woman turned back to the staircase. "Sonia!" she called. She looked at Rachel. "My little girl. . . . Sonia!" There was a patter of footsteps on the stairs and a child about five years old reached the landing breathlessly. The child stopped dead when she saw Rachel and looked shy and awed. "Come, Sonia." The woman took hold

of the child's hand and they followed Rachel into the room.

"Are you Mrs. Roth?" asked Rachel, turning about to face her visitors. "Sit down. You must be cold. My sister-in-law was here this morning and she told me about you. You wanted to see me?" Rachel seated herself and began drawing on her other glove nervously. "Is that your little girl? Hello! What's your name?"

The child drew closer to her mother and buried her head in her mother's lap.

"Isn't she bashful?" asked Rachel.

The woman said, looking down at the floor, "You was going out? Well, maybe I'd better see you some other time. . . ."

Rachel was now quite certain that the woman had been sent to her from the Charity Bureau, and she wondered why. They knew that she did not have much money, and she really had no old clothes. "You are Mrs. Roth, aren't you?"

"I am—yes. I call myself Mrs. Roth. But that is not my name. Roth was my name before I was married." The visitor kept her eyes glued on the floor and her voice had not changed its monotonous tone. She began to cough and held a handkerchief to her mouth. "If you want to know——"

"What do you want, Mrs. Roth?" cried Rachel, and half rose out of her chair. The woman was frightening her. She hoped that she would go away and take the child with her.

Rachel's fear transmitted itself to the woman and she lifted her head with a jerk, but her eyes did not meet Rachel's. "If you want to know—I am Mrs. Romanovitch. If you want to know—this is his child—you are not——" Suddenly, the woman rose to her feet and doubled up her hand and beat her breast. "Do you know what he did? He ran away from me and he came here and married you. But I am not his wife, neither. There was one before me in

Russia. . . . Three times. . . . Three times he was married. Before he did come to New York he was already a married man with maybe a child. God knows! Then he met me . . ." Mrs. Roth was overcome by a fit of coughing. Each cough was like the sharp blade of an axe hacking away at the thin partition that separated her from oblivion. She coughed with her head slightly lowered and a handkerchief at her mouth; and the child, overcome by a nervous fear, tugged at her mother's skirt, crying, "Mama! Mama! Don't, mama! Don't!"

She's telling the truth, thought Rachel. She was facing the window that looked out on the back yard and her eyes had concentrated on a knot hole in the fence. If her eyes should move the fraction of an inch, she felt that she must cry out something horrible, shriek like an insane woman, and go running through the streets pulling at her hair. She dared not move her eyes. But the knot hole was not there, now. She was looking at a blur, at nothingness. This woman is telling the truth. She's not lying to me. She's the sort of woman who would tell the truth about a matter of this kind. I am positive of this. Her eyes, her mouth, the way she coughs—all these things convince me she's telling the truth. Then, for a time, Rachel ceased to think of the woman altogether. She remembered the night when she had come to Boris' room and he had taken her in his arms. She began to weep at the memory. Her eyes filled with tears that ran down her cheeks. Her whole body shook with grief.

The woman was speaking again. "What should I know about such things? I was a young girl making my fifteen dollars a week working in a box factory. Never before did I have a young man until he came. I see he is young and he is pretty, and I take him home and introduce him to my family. 'A fine young man! You couldn't do better for yourself!' How should I know what kind of devil this is that comes with a pretty face and soft words? How should I

know that already he has a wife in Russia? . . . So now, you know what I do? I send him to prison. I make him suffer the way I have suffered. See, how it has made me sick, my lungs so rotten. . . . Tomorrow, maybe, I die . . . and my baby . . . his baby . . ."

In the morning he lay beside her in bed, doubled up, for he was not comfortable, he said, stretched out. He was like a child lying there in bed, his hair in furious disarray, his eyes closed so tightly. When she wakened him he would jump slightly, look cross, and pass his tongue over his lips. "Wha-aat ti-ime isss iiit?" he would yawn. Rachel could see him so plainly, as if he were beside her at this very moment, showing all his teeth in a prodigious yawn. In the morning he did not think of her as the same woman with whom he had gone to bed; but she was someone who had better get up and prepare his breakfast for him.

And all the time that Rachel was remembering these things she wept and trembled without making a sound. Her hands gripped the back of the chair until the ends of her fingers were a bright red, and her eyes were held by that one spot in the fence.

"Mama! make her stop crying! Make her stop! I don't like her! Mama!" screamed the child.

"Sh! Sonia," and the woman raised the child in her arms so that the weight was too much for her and she had to fall back into the chair. "Stop! Do you hear me? Bad girl! Ain't it enough your mama is sick like this without you screaming?"

Rachel was thinking that he had never loved *her,* Rachel Singermann. He had loved *woman,* but not Rachel Singermann. Always he had to possess a woman, and she had presented herself, thrown herself at his feet. Of course he had taken her. He was the kind of man who would do just such a thing without stopping to think of the consequences. And that was because he had no brain. He was simply empty-

headed, a beautiful, brainless man. It might be that he was a trifle insane. Stupidity carried beyond a certain limit was madness. She remembered now that she had always considered him a stupid man. A humbug. She had never believed in him, trusted him. She had known all along, from that very first evening in Columbia Gardens, that he was lying to her. Telling the truth was too heavy a strain on him. It made him ill. So he always spoke lies and never saw anything in sharp outlines. There was a sort of superficial culture that clung to him, a kind of aristocracy, but it was all in the clearness of his skin, the beauty of his features, the tone of his words. When he took her in his arms and murmured to her in a soft, slurring voice, she forgot that he was a liar; or perhaps she did not forget but knew it all the time and didn't care. Yes, that was it.

"He will rot in jail," the woman was saying in her dull, monotonous voice. "Bread and water they will give him. Do you think he will have a clean bed to sleep in? A-hoh! Only to make him suffer the way I have suffered. . . ."

"Mama! I'm hungry! Mama, stop! I want to go!"

"Be still! You bad girl! Tomorrow, maybe, I will be dead, you bad girl!"

In the flow of Rachel's thoughts, the word "prison" stuck, and she could not prod it on. Of course, they would send him to jail. Bigamy was a prison offense. She must go and warn him. She must get him out of town before it was too late. What was the use of sending such a stupid man to jail? He would simply rot away, and no good would come of it.

When she wrenched her eyes off that spot in the fence, it was as though she were stabbing herself with knives. She fell back in her chair and dabbed at her eyes and nose with a handkerchief from her purse. *"Bist nisht a bissel zorrig fir mir?"* she asked the woman. "You are his wife. I am his wife. We are both nothing. Nothing! You have a child, there." Rachel pointed at the little girl, and the child

squirmed in her mother's lap. "Do you know I have a child here?" And Rachel placed a hand over her heart. She sighed brokenly. "Better it would have been if you never came here. What good did you do? Can you answer me such a question? You come here and tell me you are his wife. Then you tell me there is still another wife in Russia. . . ." Rachel derived a curious comfort from hearing the sound of her own words. She wanted to surround herself with these words, make a fortress of them that would withstand her emotions. "What have I got to do with you? What will my baby have to do with you? You have no face, no breasts, no figure. Do you think I blame him? Maybe you believe I will give you and your child money?" An emotion of contemptuous anger took possession of Rachel. "It is not his child, I tell you! His child is here, in me! I carry his child!"

The woman looked at Rachel uncomprehendingly. *"Vus radst di?* I do not know from what you talk. His wife she is in Russia."

"Then let her be!" screamed Rachel, rising to her feet and upsetting the chair. The child dropped from its mother's arms and started running to the door. "Mama, mama! Let's go away from here! I'm afraid!"

"Both of you get out of here!" called Rachel, her voice shrill, almost mad. "Go! There's the door. I'll kill you! Do you think I care what he did before he knew me? Women he has had plenty. *Geh arus fum mon schteeb!"* Rachel took hold of the woman's shoulder and pushed her roughly towards the door. She was, by this time, in a raving hysteria, and had there been a weapon at hand she would have murdered this woman and child.

"Bist a maschigina frau!" the woman answered in her dull voice. "I go get the police on him. You see. I find him out. Go, Sonia. Go!"

"Only get away from my house and never come back!" Rachel screamed down the staircase. "May you die in the

street, you bad woman, you bad woman, you! May your child catch a sickness and never be cured! I spit on you! Do you hear me? If you come back I'll get a knife and cut you in pieces!"

Rachel's voice shattered itself into hoarse fragments; and she stepped back within the room, slamming the door behind her. She stood there for several minutes, her weight against the jamb, clasping her hands, unclasping them. She began to cry again, but now her grief was audible in a hopeless, forlorn way. She stepped away from the door and passed into the bedroom; and the first thing that caught her eye was the bed cover with the figure of a woman woven into its texture. Always, Boris had had this woman on his bed, looking up at him, pure, serene. This was Ruth. *Entreat me not to leave thee; whither thou goest I will go.* This was Boris' real wife, this inanimate figure, this soulless woman. She had no flesh, no bone, no womb. She could bear him no child. But she was always there to comfort him. How many women had there been in his life besides the three he had married? Fifty? A hundred? But they were as nothing. Only Ruth remained, the ideal toward which his wandering footsteps stumbled. Perhaps the man was not so stupid after all. Perhaps he was wise, wiser than anyone who had ever lived. Rachel looked down upon the bed as if entranced; and then, impulsively, she leaned over and snatched up the covering. She rolled it neatly into a compact parcel and placed it under her arm. She opened the door and moved swiftly down the stairs, out into the street.

It was one of the busy days in the barber shop. All four chairs were occupied, and leaning over the front chair, Boris was shaving a man. Seated near the wall, three or four other men waited their turn. Rachel, entering, looked at them and they stared at her. Two of them were regarding a peach-colored magazine in which were photographs of partially

nude women. Others were engrossed by the short paragraphs in the comic weeklies. One of the men with his collar off and hairs sprouting out of his red Adam's apple, had the ludicrous aspect of a turkey. The barbers, the men, the reading matter, the smell of brushes and hair lotions, all were so matter-of-fact, so casual. Rachel wondered at the unreality of her own experience. Perhaps she had dreamed all this about the woman and child who had called at her flat. She had heard of pregnant women imagining all sorts of mad things; but after the child was born, in the bed beside you, everything was clear at last, and you were overcome by such peace, such sweetness. . . .

She felt extraordinarily calm as she approached Boris. She saw him straighten up and brush wisps of hair from his white jacket, fastidiously. And she recalled the first time she had seen him, that day of the Elks' parade. He looked exactly the same, not a day older. Her heart turned over within her at the thought of losing him. But outwardly she was calm.

"You look so pretty, Rachel," he said, and she felt that he was talking to impress his customers. "Such roses in your cheeks!"

"Will you step into the back room with me, Boris?" she asked. "I want to tell you something."

He looked surprised; something in her manner caused him to stiffen. "Why, of course," he said with great dignity. "Will you excuse me for just a moment?" he asked, bending over the man who lay stretched out in the chair. His voice was solicitous, caressing. It was as though he addressed a beloved woman instead of an ugly man, half shaved.

"Sure," said the man. "Only don't forget to come back."

"I wouldn't do that!" laughed Boris. "No, sir! No, sir-ee!"

The back room was fitted up with several washbasins and was used for shampooing. The air was hot and steamy and there was a blended odor of damp hair, talcum powder, a

hair tonic, and wet towels. For the first time, Boris noticed the bundle that Rachel carried under her arm. He reached for it, nervously. "What's this? What'd you bring this down for?"

"You told me once you took it everywhere you went," she said in a low voice, and discovered that she was far from being as calm as she had thought. She wanted desperately to cry.

He had turned pale now. "Is there something the matter?" he asked, but did not refuse the tapestry she gave him. He laid it carefully on a chair.

"A woman came and said she was your wife." The words tumbled out of her mouth. She sobbed, and he stepped back against a washbasin. He did not take his eyes off her.

"Why—she must be crazy," he said; but it was as though someone else had spoken. It wasn't his voice, not the voice that she remembered.

"And so—Boris—I thought I'd come and tell you." Again the rapid torrent of words, as if she were afraid that in another moment she would be stricken dumb.

"It's a lie," he said. "I never heard of such a thing." But his face was perfectly white now, and his eyes were brilliant.

"I believe her," sobbed Rachel, and stretched out her hands to him. He gripped them, but his mind was elsewhere. "I love you, Boris," she whispered and pressed her wet face against the starched white linen of his jacket. "You've got to go away. Now. Because she said she'd go to the—police. And so—I'll go home—I suppose. But I don't care. I love you."

"It's a lie," he repeated. "You wouldn't believe such a thing. What do you mean?" he asked roughly, and pushed her away from him as though he were very angry. "What do you mean playing such a joke?"

"Don't push me away," she said, sobbing like a child. "Don't push me away, Boris. I want to tell you something else, too."

"Well, I don't want to hear anything more!" he shouted. "You come here and joke with me like this! Shame on you!" He tried to appear indignant, insulted, but his lips trembled and gave him away.

"I'm going to have a baby," she told him weakly. "I wanted to tell you this morning, only Daisy came. . . . It's too bad . . . I ought to be mad at you. . . ." Her face was stained with tears. "So I brought you this bed cover. . . . Quick, go back and shave him, and then we can talk."

"I won't go and shave anybody. You're crazy." He sat down but rose in a moment. "All right. . . . Wait for me."

"Be careful how you shave him, dear. Your hands are trembling."

"Oh, leave me alone!" He looked at her for a moment, hesitated, then walked to the front of the shop. She saw him stooping over the chair. She knew that she would never see him shave a man again. Boris with a razor in his hand . . . that was romance to her. Boris clipping a man's hair, and the world was full of meaning to her. She continued to cry, harshly, brokenly, but the street cars passing in front of the shop sounded over her sorrow. She waited and waited. At last he returned. He seated himself beside her and leaned weakly against her.

"Well, whatever happens," he said, "I never loved a woman until I met you."

That may be true, she thought. It's so good to think it's true.

"So you're going to have a baby."

"Yes, Boris."

"Why didn't you tell me at once?"

"I wanted to surprise you."

"Well, you've surprised me."

"Boris, I can't understand. . . . I can't get it through my head. . . . Now, when I met you, why didn't you say . . .

You're such a funny man. There must be something the matter with you."

"We can go away together," he said abruptly. "Run home and pack your things. I'll meet you at the station. We can catch a train."

"Where to?"

"What difference does it make? Anywhere! You sit and argue. Maybe the police will be here in another minute. Do you think I want to go to jail?" He started pacing up and down the room, removing his jacket. "Hurry up, Rachel. What do you sit there . . . ?"

"I'm not going with you," she sobbed, covering her face. "Look what you did to me. You're a fine one. But I never believed you, anyway. I'm a fool. We're all fools in our family. It's all papa's fault. He's so mean. He didn't bring us up right. If he'd only . . ."

"Well, you can sit there if you want to," he said angrily. "Sit there all day and cry, cry, cry. I'm going."

"Go—go," she sobbed. "To think of a Jew acting like this. What will everybody think? You're a fine one. All right. Go. I'll live through it. She lived through it. She and that nasty child."

"Oh, you women!" he exclaimed, drawing on his street coat and fitting the bed cover under his arm. "You're all the same—always thinking of yourselves. What about me?" He buttoned up his coat, nervously. "I'm going." And when she did not appear to hear him, he repeated, "I'm going!"

He pulled her up out of the chair and kissed her fiercely. "Come, on, Rachel," he whispered. "We'll run away together. Any place! What's there in this town? Now don't be a silly little girl." He pleaded with her in his softest, most loverlike tones. "Nobody will know and we can start over again. . . . Oh, I must get the money in the register. Wait a minute." He hurried to the front of the shop, but she subsided upon the chair, her shoulders drooping. She heard

the register ring and the sound of money. What would all the clerks think? What would become of the shop?

"Are you *coming?*" he cried, and jerked her up from the chair again. "This is the last time I'm going to ask you!"

"No . . . no, Boris. We're not married. What kind of life could we have? Going from one town to another . . . always afraid. . . . Go, Boris. But kiss me first!" she cried. "Don't go away without kissing me! Oh, you're a fine one, you are! Oh, Boris. Oh. What shall I do? God have pity on me. . . . You would go and even forget to kiss me." She held him tightly in her arms and pressed her face against his. "Maybe you ought to stay. . . . No . . . I can't think of you in prison. All right. I'm all right. Good-by. Have you got . . . Ruth? All right. Good-by. Go the back way. I'll say you're sick. . . . What did you say, my beloved? Papa'll take me in. What else can he do? I'll say something. . . . And kiss me for the baby. The baby, Boris! Well, I guess . . . it's all over." She let him go.

"Mr. Romanovitch!" one of the barbers called. "Oh, Mr. Romanovitch! Where's the boss?" asked the barber coming into the room.

"He's gone . . . sick . . . you can't find him," said Rachel weakly. She went over to one of the washbasins and filled it with cold water. She removed her hat and coat and began washing her face. When she had finished, he gave her a towel, but she turned away from him, quickly.

The barber returned to his chair in the front of the shop. "Funny thing," he said to the barber whose chair was beside his own. "I went back in the rear and the boss was gone . . . disappeared . . . and his wife was crying. But don't let on, see? Don't let on . . . funny thing. Ain't it a funny thing?"

Dinner had been finished, but the Singermann family continued to sit about the table, while Mary O'Brien, in the

kitchen, fretted and grumbled about it. Mary was expected at a party her sister was giving in Walkerville. It was to be a party in honor of Patrick Shea's arrival from Ireland, and Mary wanted to see Patrick badly. They had been sweethearts back there in the Old Country, and they had been corresponding regularly. And here these Singermanns were planted about the table, talking, quarreling. They always chose the dinner table for their family conferences and spilled beer and coffee on the tablecloth; and Mrs. Singermann always raised a row about the spots when the cloth came back from the laundry. "If she didn't have the sinse to know that husban' o' her's was a divil, it serves her roight, it does," muttered Mary and stabbed a hatpin fiercely into her hair. She wasn't going to miss her sweetheart for the likes of them. He was much more important than a bigamist. Mary left by the back way, but she closed the door very softly behind her.

Moses sat at the head of the table, and on his left hand were Louis and David and Rachel, and on his right were Sol and Harry and Michael. The youngest Singermann was now eight years old. Opposite Moses, at the other end of the table, sat Rebecca.

"If you was offered three thousand dollars for the fixtures, you'd better take it," Moses was saying to Rachel. "And with that money you will be able to pay for a doctor and clothes for the baby. Maybe there will be a little interest on the money what's left over."

"What baby?" asked Harry who was growing into long trousers.

"Shah!" said Moses, his voice hoarse with irritation. "Did anybody ask you to say something?"

"It's Rachel's baby," Sol whispered to Harry. "Boris knocked her up and now he's run away."

Harry's eyes were wide with awe. He dropped a spoon to the floor and the sound rang through the house. "Well,

that's a funny thing to have happen to a fellow's own sister," he said, looking sullen. "Did he know he knocked her up?"

"Sh! Papa'll hear you, you fool!" whispered Sol.

"I think three thousand's a good price for those fixtures," said David. "You ought to be glad to get it."

"Yes," answered Rachel tonelessly. She was erect and quiet in her chair like a wounded soldier who dares not show his pain. But she kept her eyes lowered to the tablecloth.

"You mustn't think, Rachel, we don't want you here"—and there was a break in her father's voice. "What's past is past. Was it not written in the *Torah* that we should all pass through suffering?"

"We suffer too much," muttered Louis.

"Rachel!" sang out Michael's voice. "Rachel's home! Where was you so long, Rachel?"

"Quiet!" Rebecca addressed her youngest son. "You shouldn't to ask questions."

"Rachel, will you play with me?" asked Michael. "I like you. I don't like him," and Michael pointed to Moses, "and him," pointing to David. "I don't like Louis and Sol and Harry. They never wanted to play with me." The child lowered his eyes and pouted.

"Why don't you keep that kid quiet?" asked Sol irritably of his mother. "You spoil him and pet him. He'll be a fine one when he grows up. Nobody'll be able to handle him."

"Aw, shut up!" exclaimed Michael.

"I'll come over there and slam you one!" cried Sol.

"A man she picks out," said Rebecca monotonously. "Such a man! Not one wife he has, but three. One ain't enough for him, *der maschiginer*. I only hope the police find him."

"Well, we all warned her," interposed David. "But she was so smart she wouldn't listen. And now she's paying for it."

"Don't scold her," said Louis. "She knows all that."

"I don't think she knows anything," grumbled David. "A

woman lives with a man for a year without finding out he's a dog. Did you ever hear anything like it?"

"Oh, it happens every day," scowled Louis.

"We'll all stand by her," insisted Moses. "I'll let nobody spit in my face. And the baby, if he's a boy, we'll keep in the house and give him a *Bris.*"

"We ain't got enough, maybe," complained Rebecca.

"What baby?" asked Michael. "Mama, is there going to be a baby?"

Rachel looked at her youngest brother, and smiled. "Yes, Michael. Are you glad?"

"Yes," said Michael, "because nobody'll point at me any more and say, 'You're the baby of the family.' "

"Why do you keep that child by the table?" Moses asked his wife wearily. "A boy his age shouldn't listen on such things."

"What should he know?" and Rebecca shrugged her shoulders. *"A kint. Er vehst gurnisht."*

"America is the country for you!" sighed Moses. He lowered his head in his arms and the top of his scalp showed bald under the electric light. "I tell you, I must be getting old. When I was a young man, I didn't carry worries in my head, but I worked from morning until the night, and my mind was free. Now I wake up in the morning, and I ask myself, 'What is it all for? What did God put us all in the world for?' "

"Look at the *Goyem,"* sighed Rebecca. "They never have troubles. Always so happy. If they have children, they let them hit their heads on the wall. What do they care? We should be the same. All our children, we should let them hit their heads on the wall."

"Rachel, are you feeling all right?" asked Louis. Of all the Singermanns he seemed most deeply affected by his sister's plight.

"Oh, I feel all right."

"Maybe you want her to dance and sing?" and Moses smiled bitterly on Louis.

A spasm of wretchedness crossed Louis's face. "It's a wise father who knows how to bring up his children," he said, and his eyes were suddenly dim with tears. "If you were a wise father this wouldn't have happened. If we come to you with our troubles you only club us over the head." His face was contorted with suffering and the tears splashed down his cheeks. "I hate this house!" he cried. "I hate it and I'm going away!"

"Go to bed, Louis," was Moses' sardonic comment. "Take a bath and go to bed."

"Yes!" Louis regarded his father with deep hatred. "You are to blame. You're too hard. I don't blame Joseph for quitting you. You'd drive anybody crazy, you would. But I'm not going to stand it much longer. I'm going to pull out one of these days!"

"Pull out. The quicker the better," Moses taunted his son. "You say I'm too hard. Too hard! That is because you are soft. You are all weak, cowards! You cry like babies. You are not strong! But go and see how much money you make when you work for strangers."

"At least I'll be my own boss!" shouted Louis.

Michael listened to this feverish quarrel between Louis and his father with great frightened eyes. Rachel rose from her place at the table and came over to her youngest brother. "You're scaring him," she said. "I'll put you to bed, Michael."

"I don't want to go to bed," the child whispered.

"Would you like to go for a sleighride?" Rachel asked. "I'll pull you up the hill."

"Go," said Moses to Louis. "Do you think I'm keeping you? Go where you want. All you bring to me is trouble. First Joseph, next Rachel, now you. Go your own way, all of you!"

"You're an ignorant man," whispered Louis.

"Go to bed," said Moses angrily. "I have heard enough from you for one night. I don't want to hear any more."

"It's ignorance," persisted Louis. "Everything would be different if you weren't so ignorant. But I'll go! I'm through with this house. I can support myself."

"Louis! Papa!" pleaded Rachel. "Please!"

"It's ignorance," whispered Louis on his way to his own room. "Other people are happy because they know things. They know how to talk to one another. But we're still sunk in the depths of ignorance." In his own room, Louis flung himself on the bed and opened a book filled with reproductions of Corot's paintings. After a few minutes the landscapes had the power to make him forget Rachel's unhappiness. The bitterness he had felt for his father was temporarily forgotten. He saw himself walking along the roads of France with painting materials under his arm.

Gradually, the animosity and strain died away. Moses had gone to his room and fallen asleep on his stomach, his arms out-thrust before him as if embracing, eagerly, his dream. Rebecca sat sewing, calmly, near the stove in the dining room. Harry and Sol had gone out. The house was silent.

"And do you know what every snowflake is?" asked Rachel as she pulled Michael's sleigh to the top of the street. "It's a message from a star. You see those stars, Michael? They're all full of people and each snowflake is a letter from somebody on another world."

"What does it say, Rachel?"

"I love you, I love you, I love you," explained Rachel.

Michael saw all these people living up there in the stars, people with silver-green eyes. "It must be cold up there," he said to Rachel.

"But they have fires, dear. That's why the stars are so bright, because of the fires."

Michael was glad of that. He looked up at Rachel pulling

him along as he lay flat on the sled. "I'm awful glad you come back, Rachel. Will you make me some fudge tomorrow like you used to?"

"I sure will," his sister promised him. "But if you eat too much, you'll be sick."

They reached the top of the street and Michael moved to the front of the sled so that Rachel would have room to sit behind him. "If Uncle Boris was here, he'd steer," said the boy.

"Yes," answered Rachel. "But he's gone and now I've got to steer. Move up, darling, and give me room. That's right. Here we go! Hold on tight, Michael."

The sled flew through the snow and air like a magic bird. The wind jumped up to meet them, whistling coolly, and bits of snow kissed them in the eyes and settled in their ears. It was good that Rachel was behind steering. I could never steer myself, thought Michael. What if the sled should go on and on and never stop? Where would they go to, then? It would be nice to ride on forever, holding on to the skirts of the wind. If a horse and wagon should cross the street's corner they would be killed. But Michael kept the thought of Rachel steering in his mind and was not afraid. Wheeee! Down, down, down the street, under the arc light, with the snowflakes darting before their eyes. The sled goes slower and slower. It's stopping. "I don't like it when it stops," said Michael. "The wind stops laughing and I remember that I got to go to bed pretty soon."

"We'll go in now," said Rachel.

"Just once more!" pleaded Michael.

"I'm tired, darling. But tomorrow, maybe."

"You sit down on the sled, Rachel, and I'll pull you."

"But you're too small, Michael. When you're a man I'll let you pull me."

"When'll that be?"

"Oh, years and years and years."

"As many years as to the stars?"

"Yes," said Rachel.

"I wish I was a man now," sighed Michael. "I'd buy a Flexible Flyer. And me and you would never stop going down the hill. 'Cause it's going up the hill again that I don't like. If you only had a sled that you didn't have to pull up the hill."

"If you only did," sighed Rachel.

"When you have a baby," Michael asked his sister, "will you take him out sleighriding?"

"Why, who told you I was going to have a baby?" she asked.

"Well, papa said a baby was coming, and mama said she wouldn't have one, and men don't have them. So it must be yours."

"It is mine."

"And will you pull him up the hill, too?"

"Yep."

"Rachel, will you sleep with me tonight?"

"If you want me to, dear."

"I like to smell you," said Michael.

EIGHT: LOUIS

The following morning when Louis went down to the store, he was completely absorbed by his Christmas plans. He would have a gorgeous window display, something really novel and beautiful. In the center of each window he would place a small tree, and from each bough there would hang some small bits of merchandise suitable for gifts. Perhaps men's garters and neckties, suspenders, belts, and silk handkerchiefs. He would decorate each tree with small electric globes, pink, rose, green, blue. These globes would be like jewels. And on the floors of the windows, he would lay coverings of white cotton to resemble snow. The window displays would not fail to take the eyes of the most unobservant shoppers; and other merchants would be jealous of these bursts of beauty. Joseph, across the street, would be eaten by envy. Joseph paid a man forty dollars a week to trim his windows, but look at them. How ugly! How cheap!

Louis was so happy when he arrived at the store he did not wait to discuss his plans with Moses or David. He sent a boy to purchase the trees and the small electric globes and the green cards and red paint. His windows would be transformed into twin fairylands, riotous of color, magical with the thrill of the holidays. If only we sold women's materials, thought Louis, and a pain of frustration passed through him. Just think of sheer silk stockings, and jeweled combs, and amber and gold Spanish shawls! Small, exquisite vials of perfume from Bordeaux and Marseilles and Paris! Necklaces of imitation pearls, silver and diamond-studded buckles for evening slippers! Jeweled heels, the kind Anna Held wore

when she sang, *I Just Can't Make My Eyes Behave.* What a gorgeous woman, and did she really take milk baths?

Louis was filled with enthusiasm this morning. He had forgotten the headachy quarrel of the night before and was tingling and rapturous with his love for beautiful objects and materials, for handsome men and lovely women. How wonderful it would be to have a flat in New York or Chicago or London. He would hang his walls with the pictures he loved, Corot's moods by a roadside, El Greco's haunting disciples. . . . He would surround himself with the slumbering fires of mahogany, thick, ponderous silver-plate and Venetian glass that melted and dissolved in the moonlight. He would have a cabinet stocked with old wines and brandies; and when his friends came to visit him—and he would certainly possess many intelligent, fine-looking friends—he would serve them these delirious, delectable drinks. A bottle of Malaga with a fat, crowing friar for a stopper, carved out of hard wood. How I would have loved living in Paris in the time of François Villon! thought Louis. I would have gone early to pray in Notre Dame, through the falling snow. And a fat friar and his shrill boys would be singing in the streets, and I would throw them sous. God be with thee, Louis Singermann. Thou art a man of charity! Or perhaps I would have lived later, when Sarah Bernhardt was in her youth. What fun to have fallen asleep in the coffin she kept in her room! Louis's thoughts ran on and on, and now he was in Paris, now in Venice; but wherever he might be there was beauty to befriend him.

"What the hell?" asked David when he saw the boy bearing two Christmas trees into the store. "Who ordered them? Hey, kid, they don't belong here. You must have the wrong number."

Louis saw that the trees were graceful and deep green, and he caught their sharp, stirring fragrance in his nostrils. "Get away," he said, pushing David aside. "I ordered them. I'm

going to put them in the windows. How fine they are, fresh from the mountains!"

Moses, who had been out making a deposit at the bank, entered the store at this moment, and he stopped short when he caught sight of the Christmas trees. "What is this?" he asked. "Who ordered these trees here? What foolishness is this?" Moses, as an orthodox Jew, could see no beauty in Christmas trees, not even as an aid to business. He saw only that they were Christian symbols of some sort and that they were connected with Christ. He was offended by their fragrance and beauty.

Louis felt a sharp pain of coldness run through him, as though ice water had been mixed in his marrow. Would these horned bulls always charge through the delicate fabrics of his dreams? Always, he seemed to be waving at them the red cloth of the muleta like a toreador, until he saw their eyes run blood with anger.

"I'm going to put the trees in the window for Christmas," he said, turning to his father, unwilling to acknowledge that there was anything strange in the idea. "I'll have things like handkerchiefs and neckties on the trees—you know, gifts. It'll make good business."

"What is this, a church for Gentiles?" asked Moses angrily. "You think I will have trees in the windows, like if I was a fat, dirty priest? Take them back where they come from! I don't pay my good money for such foolishness, such *drek*."

Louis felt that coldness within him, freezing his enthusiasms, his lifting desires. "It's just sound business sense," he pleaded with his father. "If we don't have nice windows for Christmas, something to attract, the other stores will take our customers away from us. Why do you have to drag in priests?"

The trees were like vipers in Moses' eyes. They might just as well have been carven figures of the crucified Christ.

"Take them away," he persisted, and began dragging them out with his own hands. "When I say a thing it should be so, I mean it! I am boss here and nobody else! For years I have worked and slaved, and now my own children tell me what I should do in mine own place of business!" He had dragged the trees out on the sidewalk, and now he threw them into the gutter running with muddy water and slush. He came back into the store and, without warning, struck Louis across the mouth so that the young man fell backward, his hands saving him from the floor. *"Goy, vus dee bist!"* cried Moses. "Like Joseph, you are a Christian already, no? But I am a Jew and this is a Jewish store!"

"I said you were an ignorant man," whispered Louis regaining his feet. He felt as though he had been broken into a thousand pieces, not because of the physical pain, but he had so looked forward to these trees and the window display. All these pieces of himself were scattered everywhere, and he felt that they could never be placed together again. "Last night didn't I call you an ignorant man?" he addressed his father brokenly. "And so you are."

"Cry, baby, cry," said Moses. "Never will you be a man. Go home to your mama and tell her to put you to bed."

"Yes, I will go home," was Louis' answer. "I'll go home and pack my things. And maybe you can get somebody else to trim your windows." He walked to the rear of the store and put on his hat and coat, slowly. David followed him. "Don't be a fool, Louis. You'll be sorry. Don't think jobs grow on trees."

"I'd like my salary," said Louis. "That'll pay my fare to Spokane, anyway."

"I don't think papa will give you the money. Don't be too hasty. You know how the old man is. Nothing that he says makes any difference to me. And I'm younger than you are, too. Forget it, Louis. Take off your hat and coat." David

took hold of his brother's overcoat collar, but Louis shook him off.

"Say, I could use fifty, Dave. It isn't as if I was a stranger. Any clerk would get two weeks' pay."

Sol, who had been in the basement assorting a new shipment of overalls, came up the steps and saw what was going on. "Say, Lou. You're a fool if there ever was one. You'll starve to death, I'm tellin' you."

"I can trim windows and paint cards with the best of 'em," Louis said brashly, but he felt no such self-assurance in his heart. It was as though all his life, up to now, had been a single moment, so swift, so quickly passed; and now a steep flight of years rose before him—to what? "He'll sign a check for fifty dollars," said Louis. "Call him back here. I'm through, that's all there is to it."

"Papa!" called David. "Will you come back here?"

Moses looked at Louis resentfully, but there was a slight hint of remorse in his eyes. "What do you want?" he asked. "Be quick or the train will run away without you. *Schlemiel!*"

Louis found the large check book on the desk and filled in one of the blanks. He handed the wet pen to his father. "You don't want me here. . . . Anything I like to do, you step on. I'd be a lot better off by myself."

Moses took the pen mechanically. "Fifty dollars won't last you two weeks," he muttered, and signed the check. "You'll be writing me letters, and do you think maybe I'll send you money? I will make myself hard as stone. You, with your Christmas trees! Don't think I'll send you money when you're hungry! . . . Here, give me back the check. . . . You get me so crazy, myself, I don't know what I'm doing."

But Louis had put the check into his inside pocket and was going out of the store.

"Good-by, Louis. Good luck to you!" called Sol from the basement stairs.

"Go back and fix the overalls!" Moses addressed Sol sternly; and then his anger dropped away from him and he started in pursuit of Louis. "Louis! Louis, you fool! Better wait and we'll talk it over! David, you run across the street and call Joe. Maybe he can reason with Louis. . . ." Moses stopped in the center of the store and remained there, a man abruptly bereft of his senses. "What did I want?" he asked absently.

"You wanted me to call Joe. Shall I get him?"

"Let them go," he said, and pulled harshly at his beard. "Let them go, all of them. . . . They'll come back. . . . " But he did not seem so sure of that, standing there in the center of the aisle, uncertain of his next move, pulling at his beard.

Louis got off the train at Spokane, Washington, and walked out of the station into the street. His suitcase was tightly packed and seemed to weigh a ton. "Cab, sir? Cab?" asked an old dilapidated man fawning on Louis. "Any part of the city, young man. Any hotel you want to go to." The driver reached for Louis' suitcase, his hand trembling with senility, but the young man stepped back. "No, I'll walk," he said. He thought that he had never beheld such contempt as that which now appeared in the old cabman's eyes.

I'll find some kind of rooming house, thought Louis. He walked along these strangely level streets, carrying his suitcase, and they were not familiar and comradely to his eyes, but the crossings and corners were supercilious. Only the money that jingled in his pocket afforded him a measure of assurance. He stopped in front of a Y. M. C. A. building. He had heard of these people. They could give you quite a nice room at a reasonable rate. He ascended a flight of stone steps and entered the lobby. Everyone in the lobby, and every object as well, seemed to be elaborately wholesome. These were very nice young men, all in business, probably. Still, they

didn't look very sympathetic. You couldn't swap dirty stories with them. That was the way they looked. They probably wrote home three times a week and had a little put by in the bank.

The room clerk behind the counter wore gold-rimmed spectacles and was sucking a lozenge that gave off a sharp peppermint odor. He looked up as Louis approached and smiled rather professionally. The smile came to his face with an astonishing abruptness and then was wiped out immediately. "I'd like a room if you've got one," said Louis.

"I'm sorry as I can be, old man, but we're full up. There's a Mrs. Shaner on Washington Street who'd fix you up, though. I can recommend that house."

Louis felt a pang of self-pity. "I'd like a room here if I could get one," he said shyly. "You know, I'm a stranger in this town and I just don't know where to go." He smiled at the clerk. "They say this is quite a town."

"I'm very fond of Spokane," returned the clerk, emitting quick gusts of peppermint. "Well, I'd like to help you out, old fellow, You go to this Mrs. Shaner. Wait, I'll write her address down for you." The clerk rescued a pencil from behind his ear. The pencil was topped by a small gold crucifix. "Twelve-ten Washington Street, that's the place," and the clerk passed the address across the counter and resumed sucking his lozenge.

Louis felt at once angry and impotent. "Y. M. C. A.," he mumbled, and turned his back on the clerk. "A lot of good they are. So neat and clean and empty. All these fellows so wholesome and so unfeeling. . . . What do they know about me? What does anybody know about me?" He passed into the street lugging his suitcase so that one side of him sagged.

Spokane was a larger city than Silver Bow and much less interesting; for where Silver Bow was picturesque and colorful because of its very ugliness, Spokane had a disinfected appearance and a listless character. There were no mines in

Spokane, no smelters. The city was in the center of an agricultural area and its prosperity was dependent upon the plenitude of the crops. Silver Bow was constantly being paralyzed by strikes and labor troubles; but Spokane went along in its even, unexciting way and called itself an ideal home city.

Louis found the address that the Y. M. C. A. clerk had given him and proceeded to mount an exceedingly steep flight of steps that led to the front door. His ring was answered by a mournful-looking woman who looked as if she had just returned from the cemetery. She wort a waist of stiff black material with a high collar, a black belt and skirt and black shoes made unshapely by bunions. She had coal-black hair that was drawn back tightly from her forehead. There were dark rings under her eyes and the tip of her nose was disfigured by a startling red pimple. Louis was depressed beyond measure. The woman surveyed him with suspicion and distrust.

"Are you Mrs. Shaner?" asked Louis. "I'm looking for a room."

"Yes. Who sent you?"

"The Y. M. C. A. man."

Mrs. Shaner looked somewhat less forbidding. "Yes, I have a room," she said as though she were not at all certain about it. "But I only rent permanent. Was you thinking of staying any length of time?"

"I'm thinking of getting a job here," said Louis. "You see, I'm a window trimmer."

"Well, I'll show you the room," and Mrs. Shaner stepped aside to let him enter. Louis followed her up a narrow stairway that smelled of old carpet and damp. The woman started breathing heavily halfway up, and Louis grew more and more depressed. He wondered who it was she had buried at the cemetery. A husband, a child? He was on the point of telling her that he thought he would go to a hotel, when

she reached the top of the stairs and opened the door of a room a few feet down the hall. It was a long, narrow room with a single window that looked out on the brick wall of the house next door. There was very little light, and Mrs. Shaner turned on a small electric globe that hung by a wire from the center of the ceiling. The walls were covered by a sickly-looking pink paper upon which were large patterns of unbelievable, exotic flowers. Louis had no idea what kind of flowers these were supposed to be, but he did not concentrate on them for long. There was a faded white marble fireplace, and above it an enlarged photograph of a poodle. The dog was hardly to be seen, for the picture was veiled by white cheesecloth. On the wall facing the fireplace was a small print of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. Lazarus looked horribly green and emaciated and the opened tomb behind was black and sinister.

"I had a doctor in here," Mrs. Shaner was saying in a voice that was muffled and dolorous. "He was with me three years, and he'd be here yet only he had to go to Rochester for treatment. The Mayos, you know."

"What was the matter with him?" asked Louis, wondering if the woman might not be mourning for the poodle above the fireplace.

"That's just it," said Mrs. Shaner. "He didn't know. Nobody seemed to know. That's why he's gone to the Mayos."

"That's too bad," murmured Louis for want of something better to say. "This is a comfortable room all right. It suits me," he lied.

Mrs. Shaner said that it would be four dollars in advance, and Louis reached into his pocket and counted out the money. Well, he'd have a roof over his head for a week at least. The landlady took the money and started in an uncertain way for the door. She stopped on the threshold and looked back at him. "I hope you're a quiet young man," she said. "Mr. Reingelt, that's the man next door, he has to get

up at six o'clock every morning and he's kinda sensitive about noise. You don't do any entertainin'?"

"Oh, no," answered Louis, his spirits at a low ebb. "You see, I don't know anybody here. I come from Silver Bow."

"Oh, do you?" replied Mrs. Shaner. She seemed shocked that he should come from Silver Bow and the suspicious expression returned to her eyes. "They had a lot o' trouble there, didn't they? They say that men were killed in a strike."

"Yes, but that's all settled now."

"I guess I ought to know your name."

"Sure. That's important." Louis tried to make a joke of it, but the woman's face remained as mournful as ever. "Louis Singermann."

"Singermann. You're not Jewish, are you?"

"Yes, ma'am."

She regarded him intently for a moment as though she had changed her mind about letting him have the room. "Dr. Vine was an Episcopalian. That's the man who went to Rochester. There's an Episcopal church on the corner, but, of course, I don't suppose you'll ever go there."

"No, I guess not."

"I don't know just how close the Jewish church is," said Mrs. Shaner vaguely. "The bathroom is the last door down the hall. Oh, and about the key. It'll be twenty-five cents extra. You get the money back when you leave."

Louis reached into his pocket for a quarter, and Mrs. Shaner turned over the key. She closed the door after her, and he heard her moving away down the stairs, her skirt rustling formidably. An intense, unbroken silence settled over the house; it was as though the house, the street, the entire city had been covered over by a tightly fitting lid. Louis walked over to the window and opened it wide, but scarcely a sound filtered into the room. His eyes searched the bricks of the house next door; they were all alike, one on top the

other, a wall of blankness, of harsh, impregnable monotony. Louis turned away from the window.

He stood under the enlarged photograph of the poodle. Had he been Mrs. Shaner's pet? She appeared to be one of those vague, isolated women who squander their stale sexual impulses upon small, clever animals. When the animals die, their photographs are reverently veiled by cheesecloth. It occurred to Louis that it was for the poodle Mrs. Shaner wore mourning. A woman who looked and talked as she did could not be in mourning for a husband. There may have been a Mr. Shaner a long, long time ago, but he could not have been of any great importance in her life. Not nearly so important as the dog.

Louis felt as though he had been cut off from every living soul in the world, for obviously Mrs. Shaner was not alive at all. She was a corpse who walked about panting heavily, who asked for rent in advance. This house was a huge mortuary, and these rooms were tombs, as awful as that tomb from which Lazarus had just been called by Christ. Louis slumped down on the cot that was to serve as his bed, and supported his head between his hands. You left home thinking that no place could possibly be worse, and then you stumbled into a mausoleum like this. Where was the adventure of strange places, the glory and romance?

The next morning Louis applied for work at two department stores and a haberdashery shop, but was told in each case that there was no opening for a window trimmer and card writer. At one of the department stores, he was received by an aloof, metallic girl who handed him a blank to fill out. There were such questions on the blank as, *Do you attend church regularly? Do you play pool? Drink? Gamble? How many stars are there in the flag?* The questions were so odd that Louis did not know how to answer half of them; and when he returned the blank to the remote girl in charge of

employment, he wore a defeated expression in his eyes.

"If you'll come back at two, we'll let you know," said the girl mechanically. "Good morning."

Stepping out into the air again, Louis almost sobbed with joy to be free of printed questions and remote, efficient business women.

At the Northwest Dry Goods Company, Louis was told that there was no opening for a card writer and window trimmer. But there happened to be a vacancy in the men's shoes. The salary was twenty-five dollars a week, the hours from nine to six with a half-hour for lunch. It was not the sort of place that Louis wanted, but he was in no position to choose his occupation. He accepted the job and was told to report for work at nine the following morning. Louis was dog-weary from tramping about the streets and returned to the rooming house on Washington Street.

No sooner had he entered his room than his head began whirling around. He was homesick, and he thought of Rachel, of his mother, of Michael. He thought, too, of Moses, and wondered whether he had not been unfairly critical of his father. There were worse people in the world. He was thinking that no matter how bad home might be, it gave you a feeling of security that could be found nowhere else in the world. You sat down on your bed, and it was your bed. The sheets had a comfortable feel to them. They belonged to your skin, somehow. The walls did not press in on you until you felt breathless and scared. The very atmosphere belonged to your experience and clung pleasantly to your body. All the time that you were fighting with your family, there was that comfort and security, the right of slamming doors after you, of walking, without a thought, from one room to another, all these rooms of your family, furnished with familiar sights: old chairs and stains on the

rug and fluttering window curtains and the way the electric lights shone. That warmth, that ease, that feel of homely things. . . . Was it possible that there was more truth in the saying, "There's no place like home," than he had thought? Louis turned the phrase over and over in his mind as he undressed. He thought about it after he had put out the electric light and got into bed. Home was pretty bad sometimes, but it took on your imprint, the feel and look of your body, the thoughts of your mind. It was only the great individualist who could shut himself out and be glad of it. And perhaps I'm not great, thought Louis. It's only that I have these thoughts, now and again, like music running through me.

It was drawing close to nine when Louis flung himself out of the house into the shivering out-of-doors. The world was still at that stage when the days hang limp and uncertain; perhaps this will happen, perhaps that. But now nothing is happening except futility and death. Fortunate human lives are secure from the world under thicknesses of bed covers; people with incomes . . . warm, leisurely breakfasts near open fireplaces . . . the crackling of newspapers . . . the crispness of bacon browned to a turn, and hot, spirited coffee down their throats. . . .

Louis found a cafeteria near the department store and gulped down coffee out of a chipped mug. It was such an old mug that it would never be clean again. There were black wrinkles all over its surface. The coffee was lukewarm and almost white. Louis hated his coffee that way. He wanted toast, but that would take time, and he ate two sweet crullers that left granules of sticky sugar over his hands. Crullers so early in the morning give your stomach a white, saccharine feeling. White coffee and sugary crullers, and then out into the street where the cold is like barbed wire in which you're entangled. There were other people

like Louis, passing swiftly, all hunched in, their faces contracted and blue. White stomachs and blue faces. They were complaining within themselves. They groaned and protested and wept bitterly within themselves.

Louis passed from the street that was quivering with pain into the sanctified orderliness of the Northwest Dry Goods Company. Everything was in its place now. The gloves were in their boxes, the neckties hung just so on the counters, the shirts were piled neatly, one exactly on top the other. The clerks, men and women, were in their places getting ready for the day's trade. Some of them were talking about last night. "An' I said, 'Say, who d'ya think I am . . . ?' 'Your gran'mother,' he said, like that, smart as ever ya please. An' I said, 'Say . . .'" but many of them just stood behind the counters waiting. Their faces were still blue from the cold. They all looked at Louis as he passed on his way to the shoe department. They didn't know whether this was his first or last day in the store, but they looked. And when he was past their vision, they began talking again. "Say, who d'ya think . . . Say, I says . . . Say . . ." Or they just stood and waited.

There was a floorwalker who looked like the hero of a polite drawing-room comedy that Louis had once seen. The star had been John Drew . . . "My dear, the only way to succeed is to fail. Two lumps? Oh, lemon! What a dreadful time of the yeah to be in London. The fog is so vulgah." That kind of floorwalker outside of him. Inside he was all business. "You're the new shoe clerk. You'll be under Charles Robinson. Robinson!"

Robinson appeared from behind a tower of shoe boxes, and was the most fiercely conscientious man that Louis had ever beheld. Robinson had been marking prices on the shoe boxes. He explained these marks to Louis. "The key word is Cumberland," said Robinson. "All ya got to remember is Cumberland. C is 1, U is 2, M is 3, B is 4. An' so on. Now s'pose a box is marked M-E-D. That means the price three-

fifty. M-3, E-5, D-O. See? It's easy when ya get that hang. Now here's a box marked B-L-D. What price is zat?"

Louis concentrated until he suffered. "Let's see," he said. "B is 4, L is 7, D is O—four-seventy."

"That's right," said Mr. Robinson. "Fine. Ya got the hang already. Some clerks don't get the hang right away. But you got the hang. Now lemme gi' ya some advice. I bin in the shoe business for a goo' many years. I know jus' what this store yegspects of its people. We got a motto. 'The customer is always right.' No matter what happens, 'The customer is always right.' "

"The customer is always right," said Louis.

"Tha's right. The customer is always right."

"That's fine," said Louis.

"Now you jus' hang up your coat an' hat in the employees' room over there."

"Over on this side?"

"No, to your left."

"Oh, over there," said Louis.

"An' remember, the customer is always right."

"The customer is always right," said Louis.

"Right," said Mr. Robinson.

Louis thought that being a shoe clerk must be the most difficult work in the world. You dragged down box after box, showed pair after pair of shoes, held smelly feet in your hands, and customers were so hard to please. The shoes were always hurting in the heel, or in the toe, or the arches were too high or too low. There was always something the matter. And all the time, you were smelling feet, the same smell as Limburger that has been packed away in a dark cellar for years. The smell took you by degrees, a malodorous intoxication. It permeated into your body and lay within you, a noisome, immovable load.

Great, lousy Bulgarians, Serbs, Roumanians, Slovaks who

worked on the railroads came into the department store when there were sales on work shoes, and they had enormous, heavy, sweating, stinking feet. They wore heavy wool stocks to keep their skin from being bruised by the hard-packed, sharp-edged stones of the railroads. When they removed their shoes, the smell was like a blow on the head that almost knocked you out. Louis would lose his temper with these great, hulking foreigners. "Why in Christ's sake don't you ever wash your feet? You ought to be ashamed of yourselves, coming in here with feet like that. Whew! Mr. Robinson, this is awful!"

"I know, kid, I know," Mr. Robinson would say, his mouth a diagonal line. The top part of his mouth was tightly closed, but there was a small opening at the lower end through which his words issued, little spitballs of sound. "What cha gonna do wi' guys like that? An' they shot Lincoln."

Half of the time these workers on the railroads wouldn't know what Louis and Robinson were talking about. English to them was long vertical lines of white sound. English was like an unscalable tower with spears sticking out. English was hard and finished and cut their ears. They spoke the soft Southern European words that swooned into one another and melted and languished. English words were pat, hard-boiled, sharper than the keenest blades.

Heavy work shoes for the men on the railroads, on the farms, in the factories. . . . Shoes made out of thick, unglazed leather with hobnailed soles. You put them on and you could work on the rocky beds of the railroads that covered the land. Railroads on which were transported freight cars loaded with copper ore, live stock, produce of the soil, coal, wheat, meat from the packers in Chicago. All along the railroad from Chicago to Spokane, from Spokane to Silver Bow, from Silver Bow to San Francisco, were these foreign men, excessively masculine, smelling of sweat-stained

overalls, and garlic, lifting their picks and hammers into the air, bringing them down on steel and rock. You could see the muscles in their shoulders moving like live objects under silk. And when the passenger trains shot past, you could see them near the tracks gazing up at you out of eyes that had looked out upon the blue Mediterranean. They were here to make money. "In a few years I go back to the Old Country. Much wine. Much woman. Ha! America good for make money. No wine. No love. Old Country fine, but no can make money there. . . ." And now they were coming to the department store where Louis worked, and he had to smell their enormous feet, their heavy stinking socks that made it easier for them to work on the railroads, the railroads. . . .

What ill luck to work in the men's department! Now if Louis had been placed in the ladies', that would have meant something. Women were hard to suit, of course, but you handled their feet, you saw the calves of their legs, sometimes clear up to the knees. That would have been very pleasant, working in the ladies' department. Their small feet, so delicately formed, so sensitive! The perfume of their feet. The white lilies of their naked feet. And the graceful shoes and slippers with their high heels and jeweled buckles. Slippers for the evening, Anna Held kind of slippers. Louis always saw Anna Held with her diamond heels, her champagne-colored slippers. Anna Held made him think of midnight in Montmartre, of the Casino at Monte Carlo . . . Ah, would he ever be there?

Yes, the ladies' department would have meant something. Women brought him out so. Why, he never lived when he was with men. It was a mere existence, dragging himself along from day to day. A woman, unless she was as ugly as Mrs. Shaner, was an exaltation to Louis's spirit. He loved to hear women talk. He sniffed at the scents they threw off; caught the scents in his eyes and nose and heart and held them very close. A woman's face, her breasts, her hands,

made Louis wonder and dream and think about so many things. How could he think about all those beautiful things that ran through him like music unless a woman was with him? Unless he could catch her fragrance, her words? Unless he could feel her, hold her in his arms?

But here he was fitting ugly shoes to men's feet and hating it to the point of deep, aggrieved exasperation. And for this he had fought with his father and left Silver Bow! So that he might smell the stinking socks of workers on the railroads! He, with his thoughts of beauty, he, who had wanted to paint, who could see lights and shades in the world that nobody else perceived. He was working from nine in the morning until six in the evening, with a half-hour for lunch. He was working with his body until he could feel the sweat drip cold on his ribs. Running up movable ladders, climbing up mountains of shoe boxes, white cliffs that rose sheer and monotonous before his aching eyes. This impassive world! The department store had no life with a heart in it. Everywhere about him the machine revolved, a great steel thing, and he was tied helplessly to the wheel. Men and women, boys and girls, behind counters, selling, piling, wrapping, making change, men and women, boys and girls, all tied to the enormous wheel that revolved and revolved. And yesterday's revolution was today's, and today's would be tomorrow's. Twenty-five dollars a week paid on Saturday evening. You opened the envelope impatiently, and there were your bills, two tens and a five. And you went back to your bleak room that looked out on cold, impassive walls.

Louis wanted to beat at something with his fists; he wanted to cry out at the top of his lungs; he wanted to kick at Service, Respectable Business. He remembered certain Socialist meetings he had attended in Silver Bow. He recalled the I. W. W. literature he had read. Perhaps the International Bankers are to blame. . . . Who and what are International Bankers? How can a shoe clerk meet an In-

ternational Banker? I'd like to cut the International Bankers into pieces with a kitchen knife. The swine! The leeches! The filthy dogs! . . . But who and what are International Bankers? They don't know me. I don't know them. Perhaps they have no existence and it's just talk of the I. W. W's. . . . Hallelujah, I'm a bum!

Socialists, I. W. W's., Anarchists . . . made sentences out of bits of red rag. They tore things to pieces. They had convulsions. Can I go to people like that with my troubles? What do they know of Velasquez, Corot, Turner, Degas? . . . O beautiful pictures of the world!

Men and women about Louis in the department store were mostly blurs. They were smudges of humanity, one blotting into the other. Only a few detached themselves into separate beings. There was Charlie Robinson talking out of one corner of his diagonal mouth, emitting spitballs of sound; Charlie, hopping about, "full of pep," fiercely conscientious. There was the floorwalker who appeared every morning with a fresh white carnation in his buttonhole, a vacant Apollo, superficially courteous and chivalrous. And then Louis noticed Peggy Bennis who wrapped. Her fingers were like needles, darting here and there so cleverly. Paper was something she caused to take all sorts of shapes, as if by magic.

All the while she was wrapping, her eyes were here, there, on the ceiling, on the floor, watching people, everywhere but on the parcel that grew neat and compact in her grasp. She possessed large black eyes, the snappy, flirtatious eyes of an Irish girl. She was such a merry soul. She had her jokes, always talking with this, that, and the other person. She wasn't there at the wrapper's desk at all. Only her magical hands were there. She was somewhere else, the sole female in a city of men. Was there anything behind her flirtatious eyes? What was the meaning of her quick hilarity? What

did she get out of life? What was she looking forward to? Louis wondered. He began to linger near the wrapping desk and exchanged jokes with her. "Oh, have you heard this one? There were two Irishmen named Pat and Mike . . ."

The harsh, artificial light in the store made faces appear like soiled rags. Everything, everybody looked squeezed-out under the hard, disciplined glare of the arc lights. A man in a coat, vest, and pants. That's all there was to a man. A woman in a skirt, a shirtwaist. An automaton. The arc lights pinned the workers and shoppers down so that they appeared to be nothing more than weak, ineffectual insects. But Peggy somehow escaped. Like a dark butterfly, she fluttered free. All the insects swarmed about her, and she was the dark butterfly, marked with gold and green, fluttering away from their ineffectuality. Louis looked up and worshiped her. He had to worship something as the days, blank leaves on a calendar, were torn off the world's space and the world's time.

One day, after he had been in the department store for a month, Louis looked up into her black eyes that sparkled and shimmered and said devilish things unheard. He thought of highly artificial Irish plays and Chauncey Olcott and *Where the River Shannon Flows.*

"Miss Bennis, what are you doing tonight?" He felt that it was in her power to rescue him from the loneliness that so closely pursued him.

"What wouldn't you give to know?" she laughed, her fingers sewing paper to boxes, her hands making no end of clever movements.

"Would you like to go to a vaudeville show?" asked Louis. "How about it?"

"Do you think I can trust you? I'm only a poor girl trying to do the right thing." She was amused at herself. She laughed until the small breasts under her shirtwaist shook.

Her eyes, like nimble acrobats, jumped down upon Louis, rested a moment, and then leapt away.

"Where do you live? I'll call for you. Say eight o'clock?" It was Friday, and Louis realized that he did not have enough money to buy her dinner in addition to theater tickets.

She told him the address. "I don't usually go out with strange men," she said roguishly, "but I'll make an exception in your case. You look like a nice boy. 'Course, you never can tell." She wagged a finger under his nose. "You never can tell!"

"Oh, Miss Bennis!" He caught one of her clever hands, but she saw the floorwalker looking at them, and she snatched her hand away. "Here's your package!" she sang out. She looked at him meaningly, and he hurried off. But he was all a song. *Has anybody here seen Kelly? K-E-double L-Y. Has anybody here* . . . He was all a rapture of notes. He didn't mind feet, shoes, shoppers, anything. He was very nice to the next customer. He whisked up ladders like a fireman. He laced and unlaced shoes without a touch of irritation. He made jokes. He even smiled at the floorwalker.

Peggy lived with a girl friend who was a stenographer in a farm implement company. It was a rooming house, and Louis waited downstairs in the hall until she was ready. When he had been ushered into the house by a tired, listless maid, Peggy had leaned over the upstairs banister. "Hello, there, Mr. Singermann. Will you wait till I make myself beautiful?"

"Sure," answered Louis. "There's no hurry. Take all night."

"You just quit your joshing!" she called down to him. He saw himself waiting under the stairs for Peggy Bennis with her fragile, charming figure and her snappy black eyes. Everything was as right as rain, because he was going to take a girl out to the theater, a pretty girl that men would

stare at. Men would envy him. He felt warm and exalted all over his body and mind, and he forgot the department store and his barren room that looked out on a hard, monotonous brick wall.

At last she came down, and Louis thought of her as a subject for a painting—Wrapper Descending a Staircase. When she reached the bottom of the stairs, the thought of the painting was dispelled from his mind. She was warm and alive. "What are you dreaming about?" she asked. "Didn't ya think I'd ever make myself beautiful? Come on, you sleepy head. We'll be late for the acrobats."

"What do you mean, acrobats? I was thinking that you were just like a girl out of a painting."

"Oh, listen to him!" Her laughter was a silly, trivial tinkling of bells in a solemn town. "Don't you know that acrobats are always first in a vaudeville show?"

He took her arm at the elbow, and he had a queer, giddy feeling all along his side, as if he were being unbearably tickled. It was quite a long time since he had held a girl's arm, and the shock sent him into a kind of delicious stupor. She tripped along like a child, but no child ever looked out of eyes that way. She had a child's figure and a child's gait, but her eyes were knowing. Louis saw himself holding her by the elbow. He saw her and himself walking along a street of bare trees in the winter. He saw her and himself materializing out of a cold, steel etching into warm, human life. We are a good-looking couple as we walk along. Not handsome. But good-looking. She keeps up her chatter as if she had swallowed a lot of little tinkling bells. Chitter-chatter, tinkle, tinkle. " 'Gertie,' I says, 'who d'ya think's calling on me tonight?' Gertie's the girl I room with. 'I dunno,' says Gertie. 'The king who was kicked out o' Portugal?' Gertie's like that. Never ser'ous. Wonde'ful to live with. Always got something funny to say. 'The king who was kicked out o' Portugal?' says Gertie. 'Quit your joshin',' I

says. 'This is a shoe clerk down to the store.' 'Oh, my God,' says Gertie. 'Is that the best you can do?' Isn't she a scream? She keeps me laughin' all the time. Wonderful sense of humor. I don't know what I'd do without her. Isn't that floorwalker a scream? Say, he don't think he's it, does he? My God!"

The utter casualness of Peggy was quite delightful. Certainly, she had never entertained a thought in her head but of the most trivial nature. Chatter, chatter, chatter, as if she had known Louis always. He didn't talk much. Once in a while he would push in a word, wedge it in, and it lay in the flow of conversation a dark, immovable raft. He liked the way her eyes would shoot out at him, out of the corners. They were golden-pointed arrows of glances pricking him deliciously into a consciousness of pleasure.

They entered the vaudeville theater. "Just in time for the acrobats," giggled Peggy. "My, how I love acrobats. They're so manly, somehow."

"But how can a lady acrobat be manly?" answered Louis in a loud snicker, so loud that rows of faces looked up at him and wondered, Who is that guy who thinks he's so funny? Rows of dim, impalpable faces being fed amusement by acrobats. Third and fourth seat, says the usher. Excuse us, please. Well, if they won't get up, we'll just walk over their feet. Louis wanted to walk over feet. All day he tended feet and fitted feet and was nice to feet. The customer is always right. But now, damn it, he'd walk all over their feet like the nigger that walked all over God's heaven. Heaven? Heaven? Gonna walk all over God's heaven.

"Oh, this is restful," said Peggy. "You know, it's hard work standing up in that department store all day. When I get home at night, I'm dead. Just dead. God, this is restful."

"Too bad about you," laughed Louis. "Here, let me help you off with your coat. Too bad about you."

The acrobats created curves and angles, circles and parallel-

ograms of their limbs. Momentarily, they were upright and at rest; then, as if seized by a frenzy, they jumped on one another, whirled through the air, walked on their hands. They were musicians playing tunes on their limbs. Each posture was a chord, each completed trick a phrase of muscular music. They wore white tights with green silk about their middles. They were all muscle; their backs were strips of muscle that they arranged in patterns. Their arms enlarged and subsided. There were strong ropes in their arms that tightened and loosened at will. If a man could use his brains the way these acrobats use their muscles! We could do almost anything we wanted. If we could turn somersaults with our brains and then land upright, smile and take a bow! Louis watched the acrobats doing geometrical problems with their limbs and muscles. He was thinking, How fine is a man's body. How strong, how beautiful! The chest, the stomach, the legs, the arms. How beautiful is a woman's body! Her limbs were melodies, unbroken, smooth phrases of melody. Her lines were perfect from head to toe. A man's lines halted, were broken up; a woman's body was sometimes monotonous with its flowing curves, its shapeliness, and balance. A woman's body was the beauty of softness, of Southern places, drowsiness, passion, sensuousness. A man's body was the beauty of an unfinished phrase, imaginative, startling, virile, of Northern places, of creation, movement, impetuousness. Each was so superbly the foil of the other. Both were beautiful beyond anything in the world, in art or in nature.

The curtain plopped down on the stage, a garish scene of preposterous marble halls with giant rubber plants in each corner. The curtain was so cheap, so terribly vulgar that it was true and vivid. Louis's heart went out to the vulgarity. He thought of the striking pictures that might be painted with gross vulgarity as the subject matter. The curtain was so horrible, so frightful, that it might be immortalized by

some great modern painter who would show how vulgarity may become beauty. "That's a nice curtain," said Louis.

"It's asbestos," observed Peggy. "See, it says in the corner, *Asbestos.*"

"Oh, I see it now," said Louis happily, and snuggled closer to her in the seat. "*Asbestos,*" he repeated, and giggled.

The next act was between a man and a woman. The audience roared at it. First a woman came out, walking rapidly, as if she were in a great hurry. Halfway across the stage, she dropped, with an elaborate unconcern, her handkerchief. Then a man came out of the wings following the woman. He had on a straw hat and his suit was very clever. It was neat and dapper as though the man pressed it every time he took it off. The man probably thought he was very well dressed, and Louis laughed at the man's self-deception. "I beg your pardon, did you drop something?" The woman turned about and took the handkerchief. Then she hauled off and struck the man a gigantic blow on the mouth. The man fell over backwards, and when he rose, there was a circle of gray dust on the seat of his pants. Louis felt sorry for the man and his suit, but the audience roared. Peggy laughed all over her seat. She laughed with her head back against the seat, she laughed with her head on Louis's shoulder, she straightened up and laughed, she leaned forward, resting her hands on the seat in front of her, and laughed. "Oh, my God!" she managed to say.

Later, the woman who had dropped the handkerchief came back and started talking with the man. They began shooting one another with jokes. First, the woman would aim at the man and riddle him with bullets of jokes, then the man would aim at the woman and riddle her. They kept this up for ten minutes, until they were wounded and bleeding with jokes. The audience would roar, then stop roaring, then start roaring again. A laugh would stand poised on the topmost eminence of the balcony and then

dive, and immediately a thousand other laughs would join the first, and all would be struggling in the depths of the parquet, threshing, gurgling, creating a mighty thunder of sound. The audience refused to allow the man and woman off the stage. The lights were lowered, the music played the introduction to the next turn, but the applause continued. The lights were brightened again and the man and woman came back. They looked very superior. They had "stopped the show" and were rather condescending about it. They bowed and blew kisses, but they were contemptuous kisses. Just as soon as they got back into the wings where the audience couldn't see them, their shoulders slumped and the lines in their faces became apparent. Louis could see them walk out of their stage giddiness into their private melancholia. He could not tell whether he liked them best in full view of the audience or in the wings. Yet he laughed and applauded. It was all a part of life far removed from the department store. He wondered if Peggy would let him sleep with her.

A dramatic sketch . . . a team of clog dancers . . . a Jewish comedian . . . a troupe of jugglers . . . each act was a vulgar, raucous explosion. Louis laughed at the Jewish comedian. Peggy went into hysterics and cried, "My God! My God!" again and again. The vaudeville show sizzled, sputtered, and expired. The orchestra played a closing march, the rhythm thinly clothed by a banal tune. The theater emptied and the vacant chairs looked tawdry, pathetic. Outside, it was cold.

For when I walk, I always walk with Billy, 'cause Billy knows just how to walk . . . words of a popular song came into Louis's mind as he made openings in the crowd, escorting Peggy home. *An' when I talk, I always talk with Billy.* . . . The sky was perfectly clear, and the stars hung like suspended emeralds, shining and detached. Stars are most

beautiful on clear, frosty nights; they're polished by the ice in the air until they gleam and pierce your eyes. Stars in summer are soft and lovely, but stars in winter catch you up and make you think of the things you have missed, the adventures you never had. *An' when I eat, I always eat with Billy, 'cause Billy knows just how to eat.. . . .*

"That was a good bill," Peggy was saying. "That was real Orpheum vaudeville. Last week they had a rotten bill. I didn't like anything they had last week. They had a rotten opera singer last week."

They were through with the crowds, and now they were walking along a silent street, with dark houses set back from the walk. Behind the front windows of these houses lived sober, hard-working people; but at night, the windows escaped from these people and reflected the stars, the unfathomable ways of the sky.

"Those acrobats, now. They were real Orpheum acrobats. They probably don't have better acrobats in Chicago or New York," Peggy was saying. "And that sketch. It was by Eugene Walter. He's a great author. He wrote *Paid in Full.* That's the greatest play I ever seen. Eugene Walter. Sometimes I wish I was an author. I'd write sketches for Orpheum vaudeville."

These Spokane streets! How different they were from the streets of Silver Bow, where you never saw a tree. Spokane nights were lustrous and clear, and the smell of the farm lands was in Louis's nostrils. In the summer it would be an experience to walk out into the land of the golden wheatfields. Spokane nights, even in winter, were fragrant with the earth, and that fragrance took a man's body. *And when I sleep, yes when I sleep, I always——dream of Bill.*

"You're quiet as a corpse," said Peggy. "Don't talk so much. You'll make me deef. You're some orator, you are. You'd never be elected if you was running for office. You talk too much."

"I was thinking how nice it was to take you to a vaudeville show," said Louis. "Sitting there by you, I felt so happy. I forgot that tomorrow I must get up and fit shoes on people's feet. I don't want to think of that. I don't want to think of my room, so lonesome."

"Shame on you! A man shouldn't never be lonesome. He can do so many things. He can go wherever he wants. What's to stop him? Now, if you was a woman . . ."

"Yes, that's right, too," said Louis. "But I'm funny, I guess. I always wanted to do funny things, like painting and seeing the world. I'd like to go to Carcassonne. Isn't that funny?"

"What's that?"

"It's a city in France, a walled city. I read about it in a book. They wore shining armor in Carcassonne."

> "Oh, tell me truly, oh, tell me please,
> Is Carcassonne a city or is it a disease?"

giggled Peggy.

"Don't make fun of me, Peggy! You mustn't make fun of me because I'm a dreamy fellow. There are some people, you put 'em in a place, and there they are. Strong, healthy people who are satisfied with everything. They never get lonesome. They never want this and that and the other. I wish I was like that, instead of being what I am. I get it from my mother, I guess. She's the dreamy kind. I wish I was like my younger brother, Sol. I don't think he ever dreams about Carcassonne. He's going to be a prizefighter. He's not the dreamy kind."

"Well, now," said Peggy, "if you're dissatisfied and want to go to this Carca—or whatever it is, why don't you go? You're a man."

"I haven't got money. I haven't got a penny."

"Why don't you work your way across?"

"I'm not fit to. There are fellows who can do things like that. They're the same men who can work their way through

college. They make things happen. I can't make things happen that way. I don't know—I'm pretty much of a damn fool, I guess. I'm the dreamy kind."

"Oh, listen to the dreamy kid," giggled Peggy. "I bet you used to sleep late on Sundays an' your mother had to pour cold water over your head to wake you up. The snoring dreamy kid, he's a Yid." And Peggy went off into those tinkling bells of laughter, one little bell starting off another, until she was full of them, and they tinkled as she walked along.

Louis liked her and he didn't like her. She was a pretty girl and there were such bewitching lights in her eyes; he liked the feel of her body, and he knew that it would be paradise to sleep with her. But he hated her for making fun of his dreams, reaching up for the sharp, brilliant stars in the sky, pulling them down and spitting on them.

"If I didn't have to go back to that awful store," whispered Louis, and stared at the boughs of the trees as they made decorative patterns above him. They were out of a Japanese print, delicate and sharp against a silver sky. Louis had seen these prints somewhere or other. He had seen many beautiful things in his life, and perhaps many of these things he had only dreamed about. But here they were, always coming out of him when he was with a pretty woman. He had seen pictures of the earth and of the sky, rain and falling snow, icicles hanging from the roofs of houses, seen and forgotten. They were locked within him; but one by one they reappeared long afterward: the earth and the sky, a Japanese print, a desire for Carcassonne. "It's not so much selling work shoes that I mind," said Louis. "But it's waiting on these particular people. You have to drag down one pair of shoes after another, and they're never right. I wish I had spunk enough to quit that damn job. I had spunk enough to break away from home, didn't I? If I did that, you can't tell what there is in me to do."

"Well, I think the store is all right," said Peggy. "Some mighty nice people work in that store. They'll get some place, you just see if they don't. And you'll never get anywheres 'cause you're always complaining. Why don't you see the bright side of things for a change?"

Senseless, delightful, stupid, pretty Peggy. How he loved her! How he loathed her! They stood outside her rooming house, in the cold night, under the brilliant stars. "Well, I'll say good night," she said, and was so desirable to him that he caught his breath and was transfixed. Her hand in his was like holding on to something rich beyond all riches, beautiful beyond all beauties. If he let go of her hand, he would be plunged into an abyss; he would fall and never reach bottom. When you reached bottom, you were dead and that was an end to everything. "Let me come in with you," he whispered and leaned close to her, and already he was beside her in dreams.

"Run along," she said crisply. Her voice was suddenly different from what it had been. Her voice had been silk and silver bells, trill of music. Now it reminded him of the girl in the department store where he had applied for a position. "Fill out this blank, please. Call at two."

"But I'd rather come in with you," he pleaded, his voice all lost, his eyes oblivious. He was lost in a night of emerald stars and beauty and desire for forgetfulness. "Please let me come in with you." He leaned closer and put his arms about her. O delight of graceful young women! O rapture of the night with its twinkling stars! O flower of the night in Spokane, in the state of Washington, along this street of trees! "Don't go, Peggy. I love you. . . ."

But she wrenched herself free and struck him with the open palm of her hand. He almost fell over backwards, she struck him so hard. "Say, who d'ya think I am?" she asked gruffly. "You've got a fine nerve. Just what kind of a girl do you think I am?" He was too surprised to answer. And

she ran up the steps and slammed the door. He had held a dove. The dove fluttered away and became a hard, business woman, very proper, you know, don't talk to me that way, you low brute. I'll tell my mother on you, how dare you. Her blow had been a vicious one. How it pained! A thousand little crinkles of pain in his skin. Each pore was shattered. She had killed him. No, he was simply falling into the abyss. He would fall and fall and never reach bottom. . . .

One day is like another. You place them side by side and there they stand, a row of days like a row of ninepins, the same weight, the same shape, the same color. Louis went back to the store the next morning and he saw Peggy at the wrappers' desk smiling her roguish smiles, darting glances out of her snappy black eyes. She actually smiled at him and said, "Good morning." It was as though they had not been out together, enjoying the acrobats in the theater, walking under the winter sky with its compelling stars. Had he held her in his arms and had she struck him? I thought she was sore at me, and here she is, the same as before. I don't know what to think.

"Are you sore at me?" he asked, coming up to her desk.

"Sore? Why should I be sore? I ain't sore at anybody. Only I like to be treated like I like to be treated. If I wanted to be sore at all the men who try to take advantage, I wouldn't have a friend in the world." She smiled brilliantly, and her white teeth made the world something to chew. A girl with teeth as white as that need never fear anything. Her health would be good, her strength sufficient to cow the world. Some women have bad teeth, and they're easy. But teeth as white as that will devour you.

Well, I'm glad she's not sore at me, anyway. That would have been hell. At least I can talk to her. I can take her out again, maybe. . . . "What size did you say? Here's a shoe that will wear you. Bench made, hand sewed. That sole

will wear." It wasn't as if I attacked her. A fellow lonesome like me, what did she expect? I'm only human and I like to make love. Who wouldn't want to make love to a girl like that with her snappy eyes and the way she carries herself, her figure and all? Did she think I was a store dummy? "Tight? Well, they'll give. Every shoe is a little tight when you first put it on. It's got to get used to your feet. A new shoe is the same as anything else that's new. Well, you don't have to take my word for it. We sell hundreds of these shoes every week, and why should I try to get rid of 'em, I ask you. Be sensible, man."

This guy thinks just because I'm a shoe clerk I'm trying to rob him. He thinks I'm telling a pack of lies. I can see it in his face. Distrust. And Peggy. She'll go out with me, but she distrusts me. She's waiting for me to take advantage of her so she can smack me in the face. Charlie Robinson distrusts me. I might take his job away from him. The floorwalker, looking at me out of the corner of his eye, thinks that I'm not giving the store full value. In his heart he distrusts me. My father, my brothers, myself. . . . We all tighten up and I can't reach anybody and no one can reach me. Sometimes, we hold out our hands to one another. It's as though we were asking, Please don't be an enemy. I want something from you. Look, I'll lay my cards on the table. I mean it. I want affection, love, kindliness, friendship. I'd like to tell you: Last night I was looking up at the stars and I thought about you all of a sudden. You were in my mind. Don't turn away from me. Don't laugh. I'm not an enemy. . . . People who wear barbed wire to keep you off. . . . Why has it got to be like that?

With the coming of spring, Louis grew more and more dissatisfied with his employment, with the shoppers who tore at his nerves, with Peggy who continued to keep him at a distance. The climax was reached when Louis was

persuaded to join the department store baseball team. He was assigned to right field, and during the game fumbled an easy fly ball which gave the game and the Business Men's Championship to a rival department store. The crowd that attended the game booed Louis as he walked off the field, and some threw seat cushions and pop bottles at him.

The next morning when Louis returned to the store every one looked crooked at him. There he is. He lost us the baseball championship, the silver cup. We would have had a banquet and made toasts if he had caught that ball. The girls behind counters sniffed at Louis, and the men looked contemptuous. Back in the shoe department, Charlie Robinson was glum and tightly packed with innumerable enmities. The floorwalker, who had never caught a baseball in his life, looked down upon Louis as from the top of the Washington Monument. Louis went up to the wrapping counter and stood there under Peggy, but she would not look at him. He felt as though he were Oliver Twist looking up at Fagin, or the oppressed David Copperfield, the crippled Tiny Tim. He felt a character out of Dickens and he was somehow involved and tangled in Dickens' weeping sentences.

"You'd think I killed somebody," Louis murmured up at Peggy. "Anyone might let a ball slip through his fingers."

Her hands so devilishly clever, wrapping packages. Her fingers like needles, sewing paper and string about packages. She stood there in her box and her black eyes looked away from him. He had committed the unpardonable sin. He had muffed a baseball.

"All right. Don't talk to me. But it's all right if I want to take you out to a show. You don't hesitate then, do you? It's all right if I'm willing to spend money on you." He tasted his words sealed in air-tight packages of bitterness. "Just because I didn't catch a damn baseball."

His own words were machine-gun bullets that flew back upon himself and riddled him with bitterness and im-

patience. "I suppose you're waiting for me to ask you to go to a vaudeville show this week? And maybe, you'd like a supper afterward?"

"Mind your own business," she snapped at him. She turned her back, and he saw the ridges of her shoulder blades showing sharp and shrewish through her shirt waist. "Mind your own business." Her words were drops of ice water falling upon his exposed, warm heart.

"Singermann!" called the floorwalker. "Show this man a pair of shoes, please." Louis turned about and saw the floorwalker, neat, impeccable, empty.

"All right, I'm coming. You don't have to shout at me like that."

"You're not in the wrapping department," snapped the floorwalker.

"And you're not the lion tamer of this circus," answered Louis. He wanted to knock the floorwalker down, to kick holes in that neat, conservative body. He wanted to feel the floorwalker's face under the soles of his shoes, the exceedingly shaved skin under the sharp corners of his heels. He longed to tear Peggy from behind the wrapping desk, to tear the clothes from her body and then rape her before everyone. He saw Charlie Robinson, and he experienced a fierce desire to thrust his hand into the slanting mouth and tear away part of the face.

"You needn't be insolent to me, Singermann," said the floorwalker.

"Oh, go and pick carnations for yourself."

The customer for shoes immediately evinced a strong dislike of Louis. He held out his small foot. "Size five, double E last," he said. "The last pair of shoes I got here cracked on me. I wore them two weeks and they cracked. Be careful of my left foot. I wrenched my ankle six months ago."

"There was no law to make you keep them if they cracked"—and the saliva in Louis's mouth was like tincture

of poison. "You ought to know better than wear your shoes in rainy weather without rubbers."

"Who said I wore them in rainy weather, young feller?"

"Well, why did they crack, then? Shoes don't just crack by themselves."

"They cracked because they was no good."

"You don't know how to treat shoes, that's the trouble with you. That's the trouble with half the people who come in here. They're ignorant."

"I'm not going to argue with you, young feller. If you got the shoes I want, show 'em to me."

Louis's eyes had gone blind with anger. He wanted to catch hold of the man's feet, lift the man in the air and whirl him around and around and strike the man's head against the ladder. And all because he had not caught that baseball. Everyone was looking at him crooked, as if he had committed murder. It was all right for her to go to a show with him, but now she wouldn't speak because he had dropped a baseball. He had never looked at shoulder blades so mean, so contemptuous. He must have been crazy to think that she was good-looking. She was an ugly little bitch.

"These shoes ain't double E," protested the customer. "Anybody would know they're not double E."

"Say, I suppose you know more about shoes than I do?" asked Louis. "All right. I'll get you double E. Rome wasn't built in a day, you know. You got to take into consideration that five is a small size. You got hard feet to fit. Five ain't a normal size. Not for a man." Louis felt utterly changed from the sensitive being who loved Corot, El Greco, and Japanese prints. He was tortured by humiliation, grief, anger. Waves of bitterness hit against him and submerged him until he felt that he was choking. He felt that there was a gigantic conspiracy afoot to crush him. The whole department store was in on the conspiracy, the ugly little bitch with the mean shoulder blades and the superior floorwalker.

"This isn't the kind of shoe I asked for," complained the customer. "Call Mr. Robinson. I want him to wait on me. I don't want a man like you to wait on me who don't know his business."

Louis saw himself in front of the little man with the little feet. He saw himself in right field with the baseball slipping through his fingers. He felt the whizz of a liquor flask shooting past his shoulder. He felt the cushion striking him in the face, stunning him for a moment, knocking the breath out of his body. And he was standing under the wrapping counter and Peggy was saying, "Mind your own business." He was tortured, and all his kindly flesh was burned to cinders. That customer with the tiny feet, looking at him and saying, "I don't want a man like you to wait on me. . . ."

"You go to hell," Louis burst out. "If you don't like the way I wait on you, you go plumb to hell."

Louis was addressing the whole department store now, the cash girls, the ribbon counter men, the floorwalker, Peggy, Charlie Robinson, the wasted, pale man who had been pointed out to him as the owner, the arc lights overhead, the shoppers, the mean little man who wore size five double E last, and the crowd in the baseball park. He rose to his feet and kicked at the shoes he had been showing the customer. "To hell with you and the whole business."

He was aware of Peggy looking at him, but he did not see her. He wanted her to listen. He wanted to stamp her down with his words so that she would be crushed, her snappy black eyes, her small breasts, her mean shoulder blades ground into dust. He did not see anyone but himself standing there, kicking at shoes and shouting, "I don't have to stand for anything. I don't have to stand for insults. To hell with the whole damn shootin' match."

Then he was aware of the floorwalker telling him to get his pay because he was through. He was aware of the floor-

walker and he wasn't. Mostly, he was imprisoned within himself, his hatred for the store, his genuine anger, and the anger he was acting. "Sure I'll go and get my pay. Sure I will." And then he was inspired. "You want baseball players, you don't want shoe clerks. Why don't you get Ty Cobb or Tris Speaker? You don't want shoe clerks."

"Go and get your money and get out."

"All right. Who the hell cares? You'd think you were Jesus Christ."

He read in the *Spokesman Review:* Country on eve of great prosperity, says Gary. United States Steel cuts big melon. Business never better. Trading heavy in Wall Street. West reports record-breaking crops. Copper industry enjoying great boom. Man hangs himself from chandelier, unable to find work. Country on eve of great prosperity, says Gary. Anaconda Copper reports healthy earnings. Woman throws herself into reservoir. Wild scenes as wheat soars. Man hangs himself from chandelier, unable to find work. More than a million copies a week and there must be a reason. Roosevelt lauds thrift. Preacher condemns modern youth. Country on eve of great prosperity, says Gary. Man hangs himself from chandelier, unable to find work.

Louis was drinking a cup of coffee in the corner cafeteria and reading the *Spokesman Review.*

Two weeks had passed since he had been discharged from the department store and he had sixty-five cents. His rent should have been paid yesterday, and now he was afraid to go back to his room.

As Louis emptied his coffee cup he noticed a man across from him eating rare steak. The blood of the steak dripped down to the man's chin. He was a strong, hearty-looking man with a red face and enormous red hands. He might be an engineer on the railroad, towns flashing by, red and green signal lights ahead. He might be a carpenter, a sign painter,

a bricklayer, a boilermaker. He cut off large pieces of the steak, gripped the pieces with the end of his fork and shoved them into his mouth without looking. He would eat steak and then he would lift the coffee mug under his hand and take a huge swallow. He did not stop for breath. Steak, coffee, steak, coffee, and all the time the red juice trickled down his chin. An honest day's work and look any man in the face, by Jees, the sanctity of labor, I make seven dollars a day on the railroad, the railroad. If this man should lose his job, he wouldn't worry, you bet. He'd go out and get something else to do and earn his seven per. Sitting solidly in his chair, shoving rare steak into his mouth and not caring a damn what happened. That was the way to be and not a man with frightened thoughts, thinking, What will I do now with only sixty-five cents in my pocket?

The thing to do was to work with your body, feeling your muscles slide up and down under your skin. You lifted weights, did riveting, carried bales on your shoulders, lifted an axe and chopped into trees. The sharp steel edge of the axe caught fire just before it bit into the brown bark of the tree. Out in the open all day with the scintillating smell of trees in your nostrils. Or standing by the roadbed of a railroad with a crowbar on your shoulder. Or standing in front of a furnace fire in a smelter, the cherry glow of the fire detaching you from your surroundings, making a halo all over your body. Your skin developed thickness and your muscles hardened; and after the whistles blew you went home to your woman. She had a heavy meal ready for you, steak, and potatoes hashed brown, and a bottle of cold beer to top it off. And after the meal you sat down in a rocking-chair on the front porch and pretended you were reading the paper, but all the time you were resting your body until the muscles lay down and slept. Darkness, and you turned in and waited for the woman. She got in beside you and you took her in your arms and went to sleep that way. Jack

London used to write about mate-women, man-women. That kind of Jack London woman in your arms giving you a hell of a good time. In the morning you could go back to the smelter or the shipyard or the locomotive on the railroad, the railroad.

Sixty-five cents and a yawning pit in his stomach and miles of streets. God, what will I do now? I'm not much of a man. I'm not like that man in the lunch room eating his steak. Thin-skinned, cowardly fellow that I am, chased by fears. What will I do now, faster and faster, what will I do now, whatwillidonow? Maybe I'm starving. I'm afraid. I haven't paid my room rent. Thin-skinned, cowardly fellow that I am, pursued by thoughts. And I wanted to see the world, purple seas and palms lining a Southern shore and Arabs riding over the desert and the Louvre. I wanted to look down upon the tomb of Napoleon.

Bonaparte was a great man and he would never have got into a fix like this.

. . *Nobody knows the troubles I seen, nobody knows.* Where did that melody come from? Louis walked through the business streets of Spokane and thought about the places he had been to, asking for a job. He had inquired of all the department stores, many of the haberdashery shops, and they had said, "No, sorry. Have you been to Maxwell's? To Brown's? Now they might be looking for someone. Sorry." What good does it do me if someone else is sorry? And just how sorry is someone else? How can they be sorry for me? They haven't got my mind and my heart and my belly. They haven't got only sixty-five cents. So how can they be sorry? Sorry is a word. Good morning. Pleasant day, isn't it? Looks like rain. Good evening. They were all words that people spoke without feeling. They were words like "sorry."

What becomes of you after you've spent your last sixty-five cents? When your pockets are empty, what becomes of you? If you're old, they send you away to the Poorhouse.

A long table extending the length of a room at which trembling old men are seated, eating porridge. Incredibly aged men sitting still in rocking-chairs, waiting for death. But they don't send young men to the Poorhouse, do they? I guess you just walk around and walk around for a long time, and finally you get too weak to walk, and you faint. At the thought of fainting, Louis felt a chill of horror shoot through him. What's the use of thinking about these horrible things? I still have sixty-five cents.

When you're in a fix like this, you forget all about the ambitions that once fired you. You forget about those beautiful rooms you were going to live in, the thick rugs, the Venetian mirrors, the heavy dark mahogany. You forget about Corot, El Greco, Leonardo. . . . There was the painter who sailed to the South Seas and contracted leprosy. Now he was a man. He wouldn't have worried about sixty-five cents down there under the hot sun with his black lady and her magnificent breasts. He painted the black lady on the walls of his hut, and after he had died of leprosy they came, the experts, and discovered that this was immortal art worth thousands of dollars. But the painter was dead, eaten away by leprosy, and what good were the experts to him with his heart still and his hands rotting away?

When you have only sixty-five cents and you are hungry, you can't think of being out under the sun, walking over country roads. You can't think of a still pond reflecting the sky, and the lazy, creaking wheels of a farmer's hay wagon. These are sights and sensations for a full belly and unstrained eyes. When you have only sixty-five cents you are bound within yourself, unable to walk freely; and everywhere you go, your conscience keeps saying, Now what the hell? You've only sixty-five cents there.

You can't think of women lying naked in beds, their legs crossed, when you have only sixty-five cents. What good is anything like that?

Louis began to feel as though all weight had been subtracted from him, as though he were a paper figure of only two dimensions. If he were like that workingman in the restaurant, he wouldn't be possessed of fear. He'd have something to eat and let tomorrow go hang. You planked yourself down in front of a counter. Some hamburger steak with plenty of onions and a cup of coffee. Your stomach filled up, all the corners filled up and went to sleep. That was the way to be. What the hell?

I'm a coward. I'm a coward. The accusation sang through Louis's ears. I've got no spunk. I'm a coward. And now he knew what he was going to do. He must let them know at home. If he didn't let them know, he saw the most dreadful things happening to him: illness, charity, a ride in an ambulance, and a public ward with a hundred other failures. He could not face that prospect.

He began to look about for a telegraph office and presently found one a few streets away. He sat down, found a stub of pencil, and started to write. "Without money. Send fare to come home." For several minutes he studied what he had written. He could think of nothing further to say and placed the blank in the hands of a clerk behind the counter. Louis was embarrassed to think that this clerk should know his humiliation. But the penciled words made no impression upon the clerk who counted them mechanically. "Send it collect, please," said Louis in a low voice.

"Shall I put in this address?" asked the clerk in an impersonal way.

"Yes, please." The clerk knew all about him. The clerk knew that he was homeless and without a penny.

Outside the telegraph office, Louis felt a great relief, as though the weight of the world had been lifted from his shoulders. And then he began to whip himself for his weakness. Other young men left home and made names for themselves. You read about them in the newspapers—Local Boy

Makes Good in East. Former High School Student Now Head of Omaha Bank. Silver Bow Youth's Rapid Rise. Nerve, luck, a combination of favorable circumstances, caused men to conquer. Or perhaps it was all decided before you were born. Perhaps your future was all mapped out for you and you didn't know a thing about it. You were a character out of Thomas Hardy, unable to escape the fixed pattern of your fate. Thomas Hardy, a novelist, writes in far-off Sussex, and I, Louis Singermann, walk the streets of Spokane, Washington.

He was overcome by a desire to see Peggy again. But when he arrived at the house where she lodged he saw that the windows of her room were dark. He waited on the corner and then approached the door and rang the bell. After a minute, the sullen maid answered his ring, but she told him that Peggy was out. Louis turned away. But at the corner again, he stopped short and found himself unable to go on. He waited for half an hour, but Peggy did not return. That must have been a lie about her being out. She had probably told the maid not to let him in. Well, she could go to hell. He thought of her meanness. He saw her sharp shoulder blades and the contempt in her eyes. Then, as he walked away from the house, he remembered the evening he had taken her to the vaudeville show for the first time. He drew in his breath quickly and with pain. If he waited a few minutes longer, he might see her again, and maybe she'd be kind since it was the last time. He turned back to the dark house and waited on the corner. Another half-hour passed. Oh, she was in her room, asleep probably, and what did she care about him? The maid had lied.

He walked past the house three times and wanted to throw himself in the gutter. The rain began to fall, lightly, and he thought that he would like to lie in the gutter and get soaking wet. He would like to be covered with mud and rain

because he felt the harrowing futility of himself. He had loved her. And now she was asleep in her room and he was out here and he would never see her again. The rain began to fall more quickly and drops of water got behind his collar and trickled down his neck. He could hear the drops on the leaves, a million drops of rain on a million leaves. The wind came along and the leaves wept in the night. And now the rain fell so heavily that Peggy's house was obscured.

He was afraid that Mrs. Shaner would be waiting for him. But she was not there, and he ascended the stairs to his room and began packing his things. After his suitcase was closed, he sat down and wrote Mrs. Shaner a note, telling her that he would send his back rent by mail. He extinguished the light, closed the door softly behind him and crept down the stairs like a fugitive. He carried the suitcase to the railroad station and went into the lunch room, and when he emerged there was fifteen cents left in his pocket. He sat on a bench in the waiting room all night, and in the morning he returned to the telegraph office. He waited around for several hours with heavy eyes and a splitting headache. He could have wept when the clerk called him. There was just enough money to buy a ticket back to Silver Bow.

On the train, he remembered Rachel coming home after Boris had left her. He wondered if there was the same expression in his eyes that had been in hers. She had left home to find love, only to have its bliss snatched from her. And he had left home to find the towers of Notre Dame. There had been in him an indefinable desire for the beauty of far-away places, the bridges over the Seine, the peaks of the Alps. Perhaps his desire had been next door to the telegraph office and he had not seen it. Perhaps if he had spent all his sixty-five cents and gone on walking, he would have come to Notre Dame at last.

He lifted his eyes and saw the copper mines of Silver Bow, a line of steel soldiers on the hill. Local Boy Returns After Vacation in Spokane. Country on Eve of Great Prosperity, says Gary. You'll never get to Carcassonne, to Carcassonne, to Carcassonne, sang the wheels of the train that brought Louis back to Silver Bow. You'll never get to Carcassonne on the railroad. . . .

NINE: RACHEL AND HER CHILD

The child lay beside her in the bed where it had been born a week before. Her eyes were wide open and she looked at Rachel and smiled. There had been long days of pain and nausea and thoughts about life not being worth a candle, and why did a woman have to go through all this? Rachel would gaze into the mirror and see herself hideous, a caricature, her body of a girl turned into the ugliness of a monster. She hated the sight of her body like that and shut herself up in a dark room and wouldn't come out. "I won't come out!" She had screamed when the family had begged her to eat something. She had stayed in the dark room and Rebecca had brought in food. "I had seven and I never acted so foolish," Rebecca said. "Nowadays, a woman has a child and it's like she was carrying a bushel of snakes. Look at me who had seven and worked all the time over the stove in the kitchen. But there ain't no more women like me to have seven and burn myself over a hot stove all day."

The dark room had been a cave under the world. Long days were endless ladders that Rachel climbed, each rung jagged with dagger points. She had carried the volcano of her body up the ladder. And one horrible night, Rachel had reached the top of the ladder, and there was nothing to do but jump off. She had jumped into black space, screaming, and that was the end of the ladder of days. When light came, the baby was beside her in the bed and it smiled. Is this smiling baby the same monster that was inside of me, weighing me down, stabbing me with the horns of red devils? wondered Rachel. She touched the

child's forehead with the tip of her finger, and it was as though she touched the petal of a delicate flower.

And now, a week later, she was telling her baby a story. "Once upon a time there was a girl, that's me, and the girl met a prince, that's Boris, and they loved. He was—let me tell you about your father, my darling. You may never see him, no more, no more. He was tall and straight and he looked as if he were about to jump off the world into a divine blue space. We made our days, Boris and I. We gathered the days close to our lips and breathed on them and they came to life. We breathed the sun into our days, the clouds and the snow. You're the only one who understand me, my darling. I can tell you stories about Boris and myself and you won't close your ears. You won't make other stories on top of my story. Once upon a time there was a girl named Rachel and a prince named Boris, and they met and loved. What, do you want my breast? Here, my darling, take me, take me. Eat me up. Drink me into your body. You are the girl I was and the boy he was. Our blood is mingled in you." And when Rachel touched the tip of her finger to the child's forehead she touched the petal of a rose.

Louis came into the room where Rachel lay with her baby. "This is Uncle Louis, darling. He was away for a long time, but now he's back again. Look, Louis, who's smiling at you. I lie here and tell her stories about a princess and a prince. You belong in the story, Louis. You're the good brother who was away in a far-off country, and we didn't hear from you for a long time, and then you came back."

Louis sat very close to the bed and his black hair fell over his forehead. "When she smiles she looks like Boris," said Louis, "but when she's sad, she's a Singermann. What are you going to call her, Rachel?"

"Gloria."

"Well, that's a pretty name. Let me take her, Rachel. Aw, I won't hurt her. Want to come to your uncle? Come, come to your damn fool uncle."

"Sh! Louis! Such language before a young lady!"

"Say, she's a heavyweight, she is. Hey, what you smiling at? Hey, who you laughing at? Don't you laugh at me. When she laughs, she looks like Boris. This little piggy went to market, this little piggy stayed at home. But when she's sad, she's a Singermann."

Louis thought of himself in his room at Mrs. Shaner's, the coldness, the emptiness of that room; and here he was back home again, holding Rachel's baby in his arms. This child would grow up some day and go out and have a lover. Her life would assume all kinds of shapes, take on many colors, some as lovely and delicate as a flower's colors, some harsh and ugly. Here she was in his arms, this baby, and she was something new, anything you chose to think her. She was snow newly fallen that you hold in your hands and press into many shapes. Louis lost himself in the child. He would like to shape her into beauty. He would strive to create perfection of her. He would take her by the hand and lead her along a country road and their feet would be bare and the warm sand would trickle between their toes. He would paint her, and her soul would emerge from inanimate canvas, aspiring and immortal. Oh, if he were God! He would shield her away from bitterness and cruelty. Together they would go to far-off places, tramp through art galleries. This is La Gioconda, and does she not seem cryptic and alive? And this is Corot. Observe the branches above the road and the shadows beneath. And here is El Greco praying to a God above God. And if you are bored by paintings, we will read Shakespeare. *To me, fair friend, you never can be old,* thin scented paper in a black leather book. Oh, if I were a power that

could work miracles! I'd lead Gloria along a road away from drudgery and meanness, away from Mrs. Shaner and the department store and the baseball coming down with a merciless swiftness and slipping through my fingers.

Louis placed Gloria in her mother's arms. "She's anything," he said. "If you call her a queen, isn't she one? What does she see, I wonder? What were the things we saw when we were a week old? And where did the pictures go, the sounds, the smells, the feels? Back there, when we were too young to remember, what happened to those sounds and pictures and feelings?"

"But she is the only one who understands my stories," said Rachel, and snuggled in close to her baby, away from Louis, away from the world. In there, under the covers, close to her child, Rachel was safe and nothing could touch her.

Louis went away still thinking about the pictures unseen, the sounds unheard, the sensations unrealized.

They were all glad of the baby, the Singermanns. Moses would come home and allow the child to pull his beard. He melted beside the child and made himself a plaything, a great, astounding toy. The child was not frightened of him and laughed and begged him to take her. Sometimes, Moses would get in his bed and ask that the baby be brought to him so that he could fall asleep beside her. But Rachel said it was bad for an old man and a baby to be in bed together. The man took the baby's breath. The baby was weakened and drawn out of herself into the man.

One Friday evening, Moses took the baby to the synagogue and made up a prayer in music. "Look down, O Lord, and behold my grandchild. Is she not beautiful? When Moses ruled in the young days of the world, was ever a child so firm, so fine to look upon? In the land of Judea, in the great days when Solomon ruled, was

there such a girl child to enrapture the hearts of the old men? I bring you my grandchild, and she was not born in wedlock, but you are a merciful God and you will forgive, for is she not an armful to hold, weighing strong in my arms, with such health in her cheeks? And I, Moses Singermann, pass along the street where my brothers see me. And they whisper to one another, 'Look, there is Moses Singermann and the child that was born of a sinner who had two wives before he took a third.' But is the child less pleasing in your eyes, O Lord?" And Moses brought the child into the synagogue and sang to God so that she would be acceptable in His eyes and blessed. And Moses beat his breast, under the holy *Torah,* under the swimming flames of the candles. "Wilt Thou smile upon a little child? Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One."

And in the house on West Granite Street, David would carry the child from one room to another and bury his black hair in her breast. "I'll eat you! I'll eat you for supper!" he would cry, and his voice was everywhere, rich, resounding, golden, and magnetic to the ear. "Whose kid d'ya think you are, huh?" asked David, holding the child aloft over his head. "Are you my kid? Are you Sol's brat? Are you Harry's kid? Maybe Michael is your papa? Where did you come from? What are you doing here? You're my supper, and I'll eat you!"

Harry and Sol viewed the child tolerantly. But Michael was jealous. He and Rachel had been close together and had told one another stories. But now that Rachel had Gloria everything was different. Everyone was absorbed in the baby, and when Michael showed his face, a great derisive cry arose. "Your nose is out of joint! Mike's nose is out of joint!" Michael presented a brave face while the others were looking at him. But just as soon as they took their eyes off him, he ran to a mirror, but his nose looked just the same as it had before Gloria arrived.

Rebecca was greatly concerned for the baby. "Eat!" she would call to Rachel. "The baby must have good milk, and so you must eat. When a baby has good milk in its stomach, it is happy, and the mother should eat hearty. When the baby cries, it is because the milk you give it is poisoned. So you should keep yourself full of good food and laugh all day. When your head is free from worry then your baby gets rich milk, but when you are sad, the baby gets sick. Eat, Rachel. Eat and laugh."

Sam Straller came to the house one day. He had not been there since Rachel had gone away with Boris, but now he came to look at the baby. Rachel did not want to see him. Her days were full of the child who made her remember Boris. She was feeding the baby when Sam came and she covered her breasts and turned her head away from him. She knew why Sam had come. She could see the reason in his eyes. He wanted her back, and she could not bear the thought.

"Well, I must say, Rachel. You're looking fine. You never looked better than you do now. Say, that's a baby. I'd call that a fine lady, you bet."

There was a look of prosperity about Sam. His features had become set and his manner was more assured. But he sent a sharp arrow of repugnance through Rachel. He stood for her days before she met Boris. What was I before I met Boris? Nothing but dull, lifeless earth. Boris was the sun and the rain and the wind. Now I am in bloom. I am blossoms in the wind and there is perfume in the air. And here comes Sam Straller, thinking I am dull, lifeless earth again. Go away! I can have nothing to do with you. Go away!

"I'd like to take you and the baby out some time," Sam invited Rachel. "We could go walking together, and maybe everybody would think I was its father."

"Nobody would think that!" replied Rachel sharply. "No-

body could think such a foolish thing. What do you mean, speaking that way to me? Now you've made the baby cry. She doesn't like you."

There was that awful beaten look that came into Sam's eyes. Here he had come to parade his new prosperity before Rachel, and she was angry with him. He was receiving ten dollars a week more for his salary down at the newspaper office. He had bought a new suit that was more fashionable than any he had ever worn. The shoulders were padded and made him look stronger. The trousers were peg-top, tight about the waist and flaring at the hips. His patent leather shoes had brown cloth uppers and gray buttons. He did not like button shoes, they were such a bother to put on, and they hurt his feet when he used the button-hook. Yet despite all this show, Rachel was angry with him and the baby was screaming. "You've frightened my baby," said Rachel. "Anybody would know that you're not her father. I won't ever forgive you for saying such a thing."

"I didn't mean anything," mumbled Sam. "I only wanted to pay a call and see you and the baby. Why are you mad at me like this? I'd cut my hand off for you."

Rachel looked at him. "You can't do anything for me," she said. "Now go away, for you've frightened my little girl."

"But if I go away I want to come back," he pleaded. "Day after day, I've thought about you. When you married Boris Romanovitch, I thought about you. Do you think I was happy about it? I remember the times we used to be out in Columbia Gardens together, and I used to eat sandwiches there with you. I used to walk with you at Columbia Gardens, and I was a different man. And then you went away with the barber, and do you think I wasn't miserable? I lost all interest in my work. I lost weight. Everybody who looked at me, said, 'Sam, you're looking

bad. You're losing weight. You need something to build you up.' My worries were eating me alive."

"Could I help that?" asked Rachel. "I never thought about you. You were not even the wind that blew over my head."

"All the time, I was thinking about you, Rachel. And then he went away from you and—do you think I was glad when he went away? I knew how you'd feel. But he was gone, and so that was over. And then, when you had the baby, I was glad of it. Now she'll feel better. She won't be so lonesome, now that she's got a baby. I felt that way about it. Let me tell you, the other day I saw you passing in the street. I was in my room alone. I was all alone by myself. I saw you wheeling the baby carriage. You picked the baby up in your arms and looked at it. And I saw something come out of your eyes, out of your body, a kind of happiness I never saw before my whole life long. And I got that happy feeling in me, like I was with the baby, like I was holding her up in my arms. Was it wrong for me to feel that way? 'I'll go and see Rachel,' I said to myself. 'Maybe she'll share some of that happiness with me.' "

"How can I?" asked Rachel sadly. "This is not your little girl. She came from his body, not yours. How can I give you happiness? When I knew you I was nothing. See that chair? I was like that. I was nothing. If you go away, maybe my baby will fall asleep. You scare her. She's only a baby."

He had come to see Rachel with his patent leather, button shoes and his padded shoulders, and he had felt tall and chivalrous. And now he was small again and he thought that he must look ridiculous. "I don't want to go away for good," he murmured. "I'll come back some time, Rachel. Maybe you won't mind so much if I come back some time."

She was sorry for him. "Yes, come back," she said. "Only not tomorrow or the day after. My love is far away. And my love is here in the baby."

When the baby was six months old she began to be a real person, not just a bundle of cotton that saw sights unseen and heard sounds beyond hearing. Her hair was golden brown, long for her age, and Rachel liked to curl it gently over her fingers. My hair is straight and black, and every morning when I get up, I look in the mirror and see my plain hair. So I will make hers curly. Gloria had large golden-brown eyes, too, and concentrating on those eyes, Rachel would sometimes feel that Boris was once more beside her. She would hold the baby close to her, and she would feel Boris' breath on her face. Sometimes, when she kissed Gloria, she was kissing Boris where he lay beside her in the bed. "Get up, you sleepy head," and she used to kiss him, and he would open his eyes and look at her in a daze. He would look at her that early in the morning, and he would be a tightly drawn network of nerves. And she would kiss him again and again until the nerves seemed less tight and his eyes looked less puzzled. Then he was awake. "Aa-ee-oo!" he would yawn. He would open his mouth wide and yawn like a baby, like Gloria.

Rebecca wanted to bathe Gloria. On Sunday mornings, Louis begged the privilege of bathing her. And David would come into the hot kitchen, just before he was going to shave, and watch Gloria splashing about in the small tub. "I'll get in there with you!" David would cry, and in his brown bathrobe he looked like a great bear eager to swallow babies whole. Gloria would laugh until David lifted a leg as if he were about to get in the tub, and then she would scream. But there was a thrilled merriment in her screaming.

"No, darling," Rachel would soothe her daughter. "He's

not coming in your tub. This is your own tub and David can't come and have a nice bath." Rachel always bathed Gloria in the kitchen because that was the warmest room in the house, what with the kitchen stove red-hot on winter mornings. The bathroom was cold, and besides, the boys used the tub in the bathroom, and it wasn't safe for Gloria. Sol had that dreadful barber's itch, and Harry was frequently troubled with throat afflictions. The kitchen stove was a fat black Falstaff burning red with merriment. He was full of cherry-colored coals and he let off chuckles of warmth. How comfortable it is to be sitting near Falstaff in the kitchen on a cold winter morning when he's chuckling with warmth! Outdoors, the wind is diving out of the sky, and his long tapering fingers scoop up snow off the drifts and send the dazzling particles flying over the roofs, against the window panes. The snowflakes are lifted by the wind and scattered over the town, over the Flats, the buildings, Br-rr-rrr! But inside, near the stove, your body purrs with satisfaction and you stretch out your contentment as far as it will go.

Rachel would get down on her knees beside the tub, blue on the outside, white enamel within, and she would pass her hands over the child's silky skin. The water was clear blue, a lake surrounded by steep white cliffs of enamel, and the soap was a white ship that bobbed up and down and wasn't going anywhere. Gloria would reach for the ship. She wanted to hold it in her hands and examine it minutely. She would capture it, but the slippery decks escaped her inadequate fingers. The ship traveled around and around, and behind Gloria's back was another harbor and strange. She followed the ship with her eyes. When she punched the water with her hands, the soap wasn't there. She kicked the water and created waves. She wanted to drink the water and eat the soap but a slight taste was unpleasant. Sometimes she would catch hold of the sides

of the tub and try to lift herself, but her mother would always sit her down again. Gloria was determined to rise, and Rachel was just as determined that she should remain seated. They fought one another with a tender and profound love. When Gloria struck at her mother with her small hands, she was striking someone of whom she was assured.

Steam ran down the window panes in the kitchen. The linoleum on the floor was damp and smelled of laundry soap and the bristles of a scrubbing brush. The kettle on the stove whistled a melody of delicate mist. Often, the hired girl would open the small gate of the stove and you could see to the bottom of Falstaff's spirited and chuckling throat. Outdoors, the wind jumped down from the clouds with his long draperies of legs floating behind him, and he shook the snow out of his shanks and wriggled free from the ice that would clamp his toes. He made a long moaning sound, but the teakettle on the stove, squat and impertinent, whistled right back into his fury. Every corner of the kitchen was soothing with a kindly, familiar warmth. The room smelled of Gloria and Rachel and Rebecca and the teakettle and the huge black stove. The world was a kindly, comfortable blur to Gloria. It was something that lay around her, that she could curl up in. But sometimes, when one of the boys entered the kitchen of a Sunday morning, the wind reached one of his icy hands into the room and Gloria shuddered.

"Quick, shut the door!" Rachel would cry. "Can't you see the baby is in the tub?"

"Vermach die tier!" cried Rebecca. *"Bist blint? Sehst nisht die kint?"*

"All right. All right. You'd think I was the ice man. There's nothing to get excited about. Hello, there, Snookums. Ain't you 'shamed, bein' in a man's company without any clothes?"

"Tell him you don't care, darling. Tell him if he doesn't like you without any clothes, he doesn't have to look."

Rover, the female water spaniel would sneak into the kitchen when the door was opened, and she would try to get near the stove. She didn't like the wind outside. She wanted to be in the kitchen near the black bulk of warmth. She liked the tub and the baby, and she liked Rachel on her knees beside the tub. Rover would hide under the table, but she gave herself away when she grunted her lazy pleasure. *"Der hint! Der hint!"* Rebecca would cry, and taking hold of the broom handle she would chase Rover out of the kitchen into the diving, icy wind. Rover would flee from the stiff, yellow straws of the broom, humiliated, with her short tail vanquished and despondent. Rover's nose was out of joint just as the cat's nose was out of joint, just as Michael's nose was out of joint.

All those warm days in the kitchen when you got down on your knees and gave Gloria her bath. What was your life but getting down on your knees? Dressing Gloria and undressing her? A long, lemon-colored dress with white lace edges. Gloria and I are going to a party. A white cap for Gloria with a pink ribbon. You put the cap over Gloria's hair, and this was a different Gloria. Now she was beautiful, and you saw her features refining and becoming strangely wise. New shoes for Gloria, white and black. The shoes weighed an ounce. A lemon-colored dress and a cap with a blue ribbon and red and black shoes. Gloria knows that she has a new dress and a new pair of shoes. She holds out her feet. She looks at her dress. Before, she had looked at things unseen, beyond the beyond. She had become very still; she had listened. Who was speaking there in the beyond the beyond? A smile would turn up the corners of her mouth. The doctor said, "When she smiles, she has the colic." But Rachel

thought, Even if it is the colic that makes her smile, why does the doctor have to spoil it by saying so? I'd rather believe that Gloria was listening to something I can't hear, sounds no grown person can hear, voices from beyond the beyond. Now that Gloria has her new clothes, she does not pay so much attention to the beyond the beyond. She is emerging from the bud of infancy into something here, settled, formed. I speak to her and she hears and understands. She sees objects, a bottle, a cake of soap, a dress, a table. Things that are here now, prosaic things. She is discovering the world. Will there come a day when everything will be discovered? The world will be familiar then, and she will turn away and look into herself, her mind, her heart. Will she be tall, will she be fair? Will her voice be high or low? Will she sing old songs? How will she stand? What postures, what graces will she assume? But she's only a baby now. The future is a long time away.

Rachel did not heed anything but her baby. There had been times when she loved to walk through the snow and catch the flakes in her eyes. She had walked under the trees in Columbia Gardens and heard the leaves rustling. She had smelled the wet grass and clover. She would look out of train windows and see brown and white cows in green meadows, and she would think that everything was outside of yourself, and you must search for beauties—the lie of the land; pines against the sky. But now there was only Gloria to see. Gloria was all that Rachel had searched for. She was trees and grass, the animals in the field, the clouds in the sky. Rachel would become transfixed looking at her child. She was looking at the world, through the world. Everything was plain to her. This life was of her body and her spirit, and that was enough to know. The baby's eyes, hands, feet, heartbeats, the baby sitting up, the baby crawling, the baby asleep, just this

expression that came into the baby's face—these were the ways that Rachel saw through the world. Is there some secret we do not know? It was in the child. Where do we go when we die? It was in the child. Is there Fate? Is life chance? There were no questions. There were only answers, answers in the texture of Gloria's skin, the color of her eyes, the sounds she made when she cried, the way her small fingers closed about a toy.

One morning in March, when Rachel awoke, she stared at the ceiling of her bedroom for a few minutes and wondered to herself what was the matter. Then she remembered, with a start, that for the last few days the baby had been ailing with a slight cold. Usually the child cried in the morning when it was time for her food. But this morning there had been no sound from the crib. Rachel lay there in bed and an icy fear started at the toes of her feet and kept climbing gradually to her head. She wanted to call out to Rebecca, but no sound would form in her throat. What a dismal morning! she thought. Why is the child so quiet? A wave of cold futility swept over her. She was without the child. The child was gone. Gloria was gone, and Rachel could no longer see or feel or hear. She was simply a disintegrating body that lay there in bed.

She found herself looking at the child's crib, and the sight of that object forced life into her. She jumped to her feet and in one movement was looking down at the child's face. Rachel stared, and cried, "Gloria! Gloria!" She began screaming. She was not Rachel Singermann screaming, but she was of the child, within the child. She had no voice, no limbs, no movement that was without the child. "Baby!" she screamed. She lifted the child out of the crib and held it warmly against her breasts. But there was only a feeble moan, a catch in the child's breath. And Rachel started screaming again.

Rebecca was in the room, and the hired girl. "Call the doctor," Rebecca was saying to the girl. "It's maybe nothing. Rachel, why do you get such a scare? *Zis gurnisht.* Nothing. You scream like a crazy woman when it is maybe nothing. Call the doctor."

"Why doesn't she open her eyes?" asked Rachel, but she did not know that she was asking anything. "Why does she look like that? It's fever! Oh, my God! My baby! My baby!" Rachel placed the child back in the crib and ran from one room to another. And then she returned and sat down by the crib and touched the child's hands and feet and felt the child's forehead. She was touching sickness. She was touching herself in agony. The child was within her womb again and she felt the travail of deliverance. She saw herself opening the front door and running out into the street. She was running to the doctor's. And on her way she would stop for Boris. He must be here now that the child was in agony. In her thin nightdress she was running wildly through the streets in search of healing. And suddenly, she realized that she had not moved at all, that she was still beside the crib of her child. "Where is the doctor?" she called. "Why doesn't somebody come? I'm here alone and nobody's coming."

"Put a dress on yourself," urged Rebecca. "You shouldn't sit like this when the doctor comes, he should see you a crazy woman."

Rachel heard her mother speaking these words a year later. All the rest of her life, she heard her mother saying, "You shouldn't sit like this when the doctor comes." But she did not hear these words now. She was straining to catch the sound of the child's breathing. She wanted to tear out her lungs and give them to the baby. She wanted to give of herself so that the baby would be the same as it was yesterday and all the days before in the warm kitchen by the stove. There was the dog lying under the

table, and Rebecca fetching the broom, crying, *"Der hint! Der hint!"* There was the cake of soap bobbing up and down in the water, the child's hands vainly attempting to grasp it. Why wasn't today like those other days when you had been secure and the cold winds couldn't get at you? "Where's the doctor?" she called. She rose to her feet and ran to the front door, opening it wide, and the wind blew her nightdress between her legs. "Where's the doctor?" she called out into the snow and wind. But the baby was in the other room, and she hastened back to the crib and was again giving her lungs, her heart, her body to the child, the child that lay with clenched fists catching at breaths of life. Life was compressed into two tiny balls that the child gripped in her fists.

The doctor came. He was contemptuous of the crude environment of Silver Bow, and wore a frock coat and gray striped trousers. And he never paid a call during the day without wearing this formal costume, as though he were on his way to a wedding. He carried a neat, small satchel. He came into the room where the child lay gasping for breath, and he tugged at his black goatee. When she saw the doctor, Rachel stopped in her hysteria to survey herself. She grew calmer and the tortured spirit within her relaxed. She must show the doctor that she had herself in hand. This madness that had come upon her, what good did it do the sick baby? She must watch the doctor, but she must not let him see that her tortured spirit was running through the winter streets, her spirit tearing at its flying hair.

"Ah," said the doctor. "Let me see." He bent over the child and Rachel saw him listening. She saw him counting Gloria's pulse, regarding the wrist gravely, lifting Gloria's lids, doing all these dreadful things neatly. "H'm. Terrible weather. Don't you think it's terrible weather?" he asked Rachel.

"Terrible. Terrible. How do you find her?"

He was writing something on a pad. He possessed a beautiful gold fountain pen. His finger nails were exquisitely manicured and they gleamed and shone as he wrote his prescription. There was a faint odor of disinfectant about him. He looked as if this was just one of those things that came along. What had he been doing when he received the news of the child's illness? "There's a sick baby at the Singermann's. It's that Rachel's baby." Had he been reading a large book illustrated with charts of the human body, red and blue veins, a network of veins, a pattern of cells running from the head down to the stomach down to the toes? His gold fountain pen moved meticulously without a scratch over the neat white pad he held in one hand, and his finger nails, dipped in disinfectant, gleamed and shimmered. "You will have this prescription filled at Paxson and Rockefeller's," he said to Rachel. "Have you someone to send?"

"There's the girl," faltered Rachel. "There's Mary."

"Give her the prescription at once."

"What is it?" asked Rachel, looking at the strange words, so neat, so incomprehensible. She wondered how anyone could write words so small. They were smaller than flyspecks. There were secrets that only doctors and druggists knew. The doctor wrote these secrets on a pad and the druggist knew what they were. The doctor and druggist knew about her child, something that she didn't know, something in letters that were like flyspecks. She saw herself going mad because they would not translate the tangled, infinitesimal secrets written on the prescription pad.

"What is it?"" she asked the doctor.

"It's Latin," he said wryly.

The hired girl took possession of the prescription blank as though it were a sentence of death and hurried out of the house with it. "Take the street car," Rachel urged her.

"Run! Run! There's the street car." She pushed the girl out of the front door. "Come back soon!" she called after the girl, and then returned to confront the doctor. "What's the matter with my baby?" she asked him. "Who should know if I shouldn't?" she demanded angrily. "I'm her mother. I raised her." There was a lemon-colored dress with lace edges in one of the bureau drawers. It was folded neatly and gave off a faint perfume of infancy. There was a rattle on the small night table near the crib, a blue celluloid ball with its handle decorated with tiny violets. Rachel had been shopping at one of the department stores, in the infants' wear department, and the baby was in the carriage. "Darling!" the saleslady had gushed over the counter. "The little darling!" Rachel had seen the rattle on the counter. She had picked the toy up and made a noise with it and Gloria had held out her hands. "She wants it," the saleslady had said. "Isn't that too perfectly sweet for words? It'll be fifty cents." Rachel had pushed the carriage out of the store, and at first her thoughts had been concerned only with Gloria's delight in the rattle. But after a few blocks, she remembered the expression in the saleslady's eyes. She was an old woman with thin, bleached hair and heavily rouged cheeks, but her eyes had been hungry for the child. For eight hours every day she sold infants' wear and nipples and rattles over the counter and had that hunger in her eyes.

"I raised her," mumbled Rachel. "What's the matter with her?"

"Pneumonia," said the doctor. "But we'll just stop worrying. We'll need all our courage and strength."

"Pneumonia?" repeated Rachel. "Why, that can hardly be, a little thing like that to have pneumonia."

"You're a sensible woman," said the doctor. "I want you to go to your room and lie down."

"This is my room," murmured Rachel. "I was lying

there in bed. Every morning she wakes me, but today I didn't hear a sound. I must have overslept." Rachel tugged nervously at the doctor's sleeve, and he took firm hold of her wrist and loosened her grasp.

"Perhaps you'd just better sit down on the bed," said the doctor. He was bending over the child again, taking her temperature. He was so cold, so distant, but it might be that he would make the baby well again. You couldn't expect him to understand Rachel's anxiety, the measurements of her grief. But perhaps he did understand and the comprehension bored him. Where had he been yesterday and the day before and the day before that? He came into houses that smelled of illness and he removed the gold fountain pen from his vest pocket and started writing secrets on a pad. All the houses must be the same to him. He visited so many who were sick, so many who were dying, was anyone ever well in his eyes? He looked as if he hated the world for being sick. I go from house to house and see men and women and children lying in bed, moaning, or too weak to moan. I so rarely see well people. I rarely speak with those who are not diseased.

"Is she very sick, doctor?"

"Yes. She is a very sick child. She's been sick for several days and I wonder you didn't call me sooner. But you'd better lie down."

"I can't lie down, doctor. Not with her sick that way."

Rebecca was once more in the room and stood in one corner, pulling her knuckles until they cracked. "Didn't I say you shouldn't to take the baby out in cold weather?" she asked mournfully. "I told you and I told you, *aber du hast nisht gehort.*"

"My dear woman, don't stand there talking," complained the doctor. "Ah, there's the door. That must be the girl."

There were boxes wrapped in green paper, tied with red cord. The paper and cord smelled of bottles in a drug store,

each bottle exactly like the one beside it, only with different writing on the label. Acids, herbs, oils, camphor, rosewater, iodine, rock candy, chloroform, perfume, white starched jackets. . . . That smell was in the house now and it hung about the baby in the crib. First, the doctor had brought in the smell, and now the hired girl was bringing it in bearing parcels wrapped with green paper and tied with red string. Carnival colors for illness and death: why did they do that? The paper should be ordinary and colorless and the string plain white. Mardi Gras colors for death. That was wrong. All the time, Rachel was trying to force breath and life into her child. Boris had left her a child and what had she done with it? Taken it out in the cold so that it would catch pneumonia. And if the child should die, then Boris would be gone forever, a faint picture obliterated. So long as the baby was here and she could put her in dresses and put her shoes on and bathe her and listen to her prattle, Boris was also present, straight and alive or sleeping beside her, his bright, tingling hair against her cheek, tasting in her mouth. She had gone to him that night in winter, and he had said, "Ah, stay. It's such a night for love." And now the child of that love lay in the crib weighed down by the odors of drugs.

Rachel was thoroughly aroused. She stood up and confronted the doctor. "You save my baby," she demanded. "She's such a little thing to have pneumonia. A little thing like that." But she could draw nothing but a formless sympathy from the doctor. She looked at the child; the face had turned blue and the small body was tense and sharp in a strait-jacket of suffering. Rachel could not understand. Only yesterday she had been plump as you like and rosy. A few days ago she had stood up in her carriage and said impertinent things. She had seen a dog and called to it. She had become aware of the passing parade of life and

pictures and sounds. They were all things that were here and not in the beyond the beyond. A dog with four legs, two beseeching eyes, and a tail that is alternately gay and sad. A cat that is soft to the touch, whose back lifts itself under your touch until you feel the bone of life under the fur. Front windows that look surprised at the radiant sunlight or that look blind when the shades are drawn. The muddy streets with long ridges formed by the wheels of passing vehicles. Dumps of steaming manure along the streets. Sparrows descend like a rain of bullets and begin pecking and chirping in the steaming manure. The white baby-blanket of the carriage, soft and furry as the feel of the cat. The baby saw, heard, and felt these things that were here and not back in the sequestered somnolence of her infancy.

"She's blue," muttered Rachel. "She's blue and cold." She began to moan and wring her hands. "I knew when they brought these drug-store smells in the house that something terrible would happen. That green paper and red string. In the morning I would get out of my bed and she would feel with her mouth all over my breast until she got the milk. But now she's turning blue and cold."

The doctor patted her shoulder awkwardly. "We can only wait now. Is her father here?"

Rachel looked at him in bewilderment. "Her father? He went away. He won't be here. What wouldn't he say to me if he knew I'd taken her out in this cold weather. If she goes, her father will never come back. Though you'd hardly think a little thing like that could have pneumonia." She felt the baby's hand and whispered, "It's like a fading flower."

"Come, Rachel," said Rebecca and put her arm about her daughter's shoulder. "Come in the kitchen and I give you a cup from coffee."

"Oh, leave me alone, can't you?" Rachel snapped at her mother. "Coffee, coffee, coffee. That's all I hear, morning, noon, and night. Go and drink your coffee and leave me alone."

"I am your mother," said Rebecca in mournful surprise. "You must not think that your mother she is a stranger."

"Yes, go and get some coffee. It won't harm you," said the doctor. "There won't be a change for a few hours. You'll need all your strength."

"You bring the coffee in here," said Rachel. "Look, mama. Were any of your children like this? You had such good luck with your children. I never heard of such good luck." Rachel turned to the doctor and said miserably, "She had seven children, and there was never anything like this. It doesn't come from our family."

"It's the frightful weather," said the doctor. "But you'd better go into the kitchen and have your mother give you a cup of coffee."

In the kitchen, Rachel was reminded that this was just the place on the floor where the tub had been, and right here she had got down on her knees to bathe Gloria. In the kitchen were the stove and the teakettle. The baby's skin was so soft that the least little irritation was bad for it. When she sifted talcum from the can down on the baby where she lay on her stomach, the room was softly enveloped in a feathery perfume. How cool the talcum was! On the can of powder was the picture of a happy child. The child would never be ill. Forever she would be cool and comfortable, forever laughing there on the label. As Rachel finished her coffee, there was a scratching noise at the kitchen door, so that the door knob rattled and turned.

"Let in the dog," murmured Rachel. She remembered the way Gloria's eyes had shone when the dog came into the room. And the answering look in the dog's eyes had been

sweetly apologetic. Now that she thought of it, Rachel treasured the remembrance; but at the time she had made her mother drive the dog out of the kitchen.

"I told the girl to go and bring papa home," said Rebecca. "He should be here maybe we need him."

"What do we need him for?" demanded Rachel angrily. The coffee was strumming in her head and kicking her nerves alive. The coffee made her wonder how anything could die or be dead. "The baby will be all right. I don't want the family around this house waiting for my baby to die. Always you are doing foolish things, mama. Will you ever have any sense? Why did you have to go and send for papa? Maybe the doctor has an important errand for the girl. At a time like this you send the girl—when perhaps she'll be needed—at a time like this——"

Rachel went back into the bedroom to look at her baby. Everything seemed slow and slow and slow. Outdoors, the snow fell languorously, the flakes seeming to hesitate in the air, taking their time before they reached the importunate, craving earth. Inside, the doctor moved about slowly, just so it wasn't himself who was in long, enduring pain, growing blue and cold, so slowly, slowly. Before, when the doctor had been on his way to the house, Rachel had watched the particles of dust in the room rotating in a mad frenzy, and she had seen the beats of time in the air falling over themselves, running quickly, quickly into nothingness. And now the house was tired, soporific with drugs and slow decay. Everyone was waiting. The world was revolving much more slowly than it had ever revolved before. Rachel sat down on the edge of the bed and tried to push the world around and tried to breathe warmth and color into her blue, cold child.

But as she continued to sit by the side of the crib, the conviction grew on her that she would never bathe her baby again on this earth. The irregular breathing was harsh

now as though life were weighed down by chains. For an instant the child opened her eyes and there came that expression into them of seeing beyond the beyond. She did not see Rachel or the objects in the room, the things that were there before her eyes. She was looking through a long line of doors that marched into Infinity. Gloria saw down through the long corridor of space and beyond. She's seeing something that we can't see, thought Rachel, something way beyond there. It isn't a real thing the way things are real in this world. It isn't like a tree or a vase or a mountain. It's like something you see beyond a picture that's painted by a great artist. There's the frame and the canvas and the paint on the canvas, the paint that makes outlines and colors and a story. And then we forget about the materials that made the picture and see clear through to something that doesn't weigh or measure, something made out of the invisible. She came from there, from the invisible, and now she's going back again. She was something that rose out of the love I had for Boris, not the love I had when we were in bed together and his flesh was on my flesh, but something that was like an invisible echo of my love for Boris. She was part of the breath that passed between us when we kissed. She was of our fingers when they touched, the electricity of our fingers and hands. She was what we saw in each other's eyes at sudden, unsuspected moments.

The blue of the child's face becomes crystal and almost transparent. Her hands are unclenched and lie like wax beside her. And Rachel knows that she is gone, a vapor merged into the atmosphere. The long line of numberless doors have opened before her and closed after her. She is somewhere beyond the beyond. She has left behind her waxen image in the crib, a delicate, almost colorless image that some master craftsman has made of perishable stuffs.

She is as light and impalpable as gossamer, as perfectly fashioned as a lovely lyric,

> Helen, thy beauty is to me
> Like those Nicean barks of yore
> That gently, o'er a perfumed sea
> The weary, way-worn wanderer bore
> To his own native shore.

She lies there with her eyes closed, her hair still alive in certain strands with a golden vibrancy, but her hands are white and her form is still with the deep, devout stillness of calm water. If you blow heavily on the figure of a dead child, the form may dissolve and there will be nothing to look down upon. If you take the lifeless body into your hands you will hold the petals of a flower that have long been pressed between the pages of a closed book. The petals retain, for an instant, their harmony of shape, then crumble into powder that dissolves into the atmosphere. All that she has left behind is the impalpable mist of herself so fair to look upon, a fragrance within a dream.

"She's gone," said the doctor.

"She passed from one door to another, and they closed behind her so softly, you couldn't hear the smallest sound," said Rachel.

A white crape and a few white lilies hung on the door. A white hearse was drawn up in front the Singermann house, and presently David and Louis carried out a small white coffin that they placed within the hearse. Rachel followed after her child, and thought that it was not right, the coffin, the hearse, the white horses. Her child that she had bathed and dressed, upon whose body she had sifted talcum powder, should not be placed in such an ugly wagon that was for all the world to see. She heard the sobs of her mother behind her, the loud weeping of friends who had been invited to the funeral. They should not cry, for the baby was not theirs

but her own, and the tears should come from her own eyes and taste bitter in her own mouth. They were making a show of her own private affair, her child like wax beneath the lid of that coffin. They had entered a theater and were sitting in the rear dimness having a good time with their grief, tearing out the grief from their insides, holding it in their hands, feeling it, placing it to their mouths, tasting it. It was their show and they were sitting comfortably in their grief, tasting their tears, saying, "Too hot. A little more salt and my grief will be finished. Oh, what flavorsome grief. How I love my grief. This is the best grief I ever tasted." These people before her and behind her clothed in the consoling vestments of grief, rolling over and over until they were comfortable and asleep in their grief. But she had no grief in which to be comfortable; she must walk stark naked with no grief to defend and sustain her. She had only her bereft limbs, her exposed, craving breasts. The procession moved dankly along the copper streets of Silver Bow, and Rachel thought that this was the way to bury the full grown and aged, not a child.

I should like to take her out of the coffin, thought Rachel, remove that white dress and feel her body against me. She is wax, but the one I knew is off somewhere in the beyond the beyond, seeing colors, knowing wisdom that I can't see or know, that even the wisest men on this earth cannot perceive or understand. I should like to take what's left of her out of the coffin and go off with her somewhere, we two alone. I would hide her so that nobody would know what I was carrying, so that no one could tell that she was what was left of my love for Boris, the invisible echo of my love for Boris. Because she was mine and not theirs, so why should they have a show for everybody to see, and why should they put her in an ugly wagon that is so ugly white? It's the kind of white that makes me sick, the white white, the wood white of coffins and dead places. When Boris and

I went to live in our own rooms, I said I would not have white woodwork, because it made me think of dead children and a white crape on the door and a white hearse so ugly. They try to make it beautiful, but it's so, so ugly. I should like to take her out of the coffin and run away with her to the mountains where nobody could see me and what was left of her. I would bury her near the sky under the pine trees. I would put her inside the mountain, and she would be part of the earth pretty soon, part of the rocks and the trees. I would be the only one to know that she was there and that would be beautiful to me.

But when they had lowered the coffin into the grave, Rachel could cry at last. It was not so much for her child that she wept; she had seen it die by inches in the crib. She had fled with her child away to unfathomable places, where no one could follow, since she and she alone had borne the child and given it birth one windy morning. But as she stood by the opened grave, this unnatural cavity of the earth, she looked about her, away from the ugliness of the hole, and she saw those of her own blood standing in attendance. She saw her father listening to the words of the rabbi, and she cried because of her father's grief. He looked immortally sad with his long beard and his hunched shoulders. Sorrowful and eternally questioning Israel, that was her father. He had been in Roumania pressing wine; he had been in Minneapolis driving a horse and wagon through the streets, calling, "Straw-ber-r-ies! Fresh straw-ber-r-ries!" And now he was in the harsh, unbeautiful cemetery in Silver Bow burying a grandchild. Rachel cried because of him, because he was Israel and wondering, Why? She wept because of Moses, for the child was already buried up there on the mountain's top, away from everyone, away from all mortal grieving.

There were all the Singermanns, Moses and Rebecca and the children, and they stood by the side of an ugly hole, and

Rachel felt such a pity for them. They were all so good in the cemetery, so humble; death was laid bare to them, and each could ponder the inevitable extinction that lay at the end of an uneasy road. They worked so hard, worked and loved and hated and grieved so hard, but now they could stand outside themselves and view, with an awed grief, the inevitable extinction of labor and love, hate and sadness. Strong, sturdy Singermann men that stood on the edge of a child's grave and wondered and walked questioning ways within themselves. There was Louis who had gone away seeking the echo of an echo, but he never heard it and was home again. There was Joseph who had escaped his domineering wife to come to the cemetery. For a moment he was free of his store, the cliffs of shoes, the piles of merchandise that so bewitched him. For a time he was free of Daisy with her set phrases and her interminable lusts. For a time he was with Louis and Louis was with him, and they were not separate individuals, but Singermann fiber and Singermann blood, indeterminate within each other. Joseph is Louis and Louis is David, and we are all Singermann standing here by an ugly hole. The younger sons, Sol and Harry and Michael, looked into the grave, and there was a pencil with an indelible point writing in their minds. The indelible point was writing Death, and the marks would be there until the end. Michael would never forget this meeting beside the grave of a child. He would grow up touching joy and ecstatic pleasure and frantic fear, but always the word Death, written by the indelible pencil, would be in his mind. And he would remember the sharp March weather, the empty hole, the mourners, the way shoulders were hunched, the top of the coffin startlingly white in the gray afternoon.

A sweetness of sorrow ran through Rachel's veins, and she was soothed and comforted. She heard the first spadeful of moist earth dropping on the coffin. She saw the gravediggers, their sleeves rolled up above their elbows, casting

the earth back into the hole. This was the way they earned their money to buy bread and shelter, by digging graves and covering boxes over with earth. Were they thinking of the child in the coffin, of the mourners who stood about the grave? Or were they thinking of their own children, in school, at games, running alive and free through the streets? Their thoughts might be far away, but they, too, were part of Singermann, part of the mourners and the dead child. A man buried a strange child and did not know that the child was part of himself. The child had been blood in his blood, a mind beating away in the pulse of his own mind. White men did not know that black and red and yellow men were blood in their blood, bone of their bone. White men walked with their heads in the air and passed by black and yellow men. They could not tell that all bodies were together on the earth, and the blood that ran through the veins of one continued on through the veins of another; that the living are in the dead and the dead in the living. The gravediggers were composed of all men and all men were gravediggers. And from a town in Africa to a town in Montana, from a yellow man in China to a white man in California or Massachusetts or England or Montana was no farther than the space between one heartbeat and another.

"You said I should come back some time," said Sam Straller. "Did I come too soon? Maybe you'll go out to Columbia Gardens with me some night?" he asked. This was a year after Rachel's child had been buried in the cemetery.

"Not Columbia Gardens," said Rachel, thinking of the time she had met Boris there. "There are plenty of other places to go; the Nine Mile Canyon and Gregson Springs and the road that goes on to Yellowstone are pleasant places."

He was crazily pleased. He clapped his hands together

and the shine on his button shoes was no more dazzling than the look in his eyes. "I want to tell you, Rachel, that your father said he would back me in business. He said he'd rent me a store in Anaconda and go my backing. I'm thinking of leaving the newspaper. It's time I was in business for myself."

"I think that would be a fine thing for you, Sam," she said. "A store all your own, and you your own boss. That would be the best thing that could happen to you." She saw him again, completely, as she had not seen him in years. He was still insignificant looking but for the fact that the light in his eyes when he regarded her raised him. He was nothing, a small man with a ridiculous fuzz of uncertain hairs above his lip, and he still sucked his teeth between breathless phrases. But his colorlessness was brightened into something when he looked at her, as if she alone had the power to hold him above himself. She remembered the night when she had walked through the snow to Boris and Sam had met her. Her words had beaten him small and abject that night, but now her words had the power to hold him aloft like a triumphant banner.

She felt now that she did not dislike him any more. There had been times in the past when she had wanted to strike at him, kick him. He had always talked about dull, familiar things in a lap-dog way, as if he were vomiting out words that had disagreed with his stomach. And now he still talked about these same things, but Rachel did not dislike them, because she could see them as part of a pattern of existence. Sam was what he was; it would be hard to change him. You couldn't put new words into his mouth any more than new brains into his head. He was that which had been awaiting Rachel at the end of her adventure. She thought, Each of us is like a worm crawling through the earth. We meet an adventure; the worm crawls into the bud of a flower and drinks honey and

imagines itself in Paradise. So had I been coiled in the bud of a flower, but the petals withered, the roots died. The fragrance was blown away in the wind. Like the worm I crawled out of the rotting bud and now I am once more burrowing blindly through the earth.

When she told her father that she was going to marry Sam, he kissed her forehead and was relieved. Moses decided that he would open a store for Sam in Anaconda —a town twenty-six miles from Silver Bow. The Singermann house was loud with talk that concerned itself with Sam's chances of building up a business in Anaconda. There were many heated arguments in which all the Singermanns joined, gesticulating with their hands, growing red in their faces. There were explosions of words that had to do with stock-taking, discount of bills, competition, cotton and wool, wholesale houses, drummers, the choice of a bank, credit and cash. It was agreed that Sam should open his new store with a gigantic sale. There would be dodgers to circulate from house to house and a page advertisement in *The Anaconda Standard*. David suggested that the motto of the new enterprise be, "A dollar spent at the Boston Store is a dollar earned." Louis laughed at the motto and David became very angry so that Moses had to interfere between them, saying, "This is not a time to fight. Wait until the store is opened."

Sam would employ two clerks, a man and a woman, because Rachel had no mind for business. She wanted a house of her own now where she could crawl from room to room for the remainder of her life, cooking meals for Sam, darning his socks, dusting his furniture. The house would have a floor and a ceiling and the furniture would be hard and project sharp edges. In the flat where she had lived with Boris there had been only air to walk upon and the roof had been in the stars; but all that was in the past. Her romance was on the top of a mountain

buried under a pine tree. Her romance was in the dust of her child, part of the earth, of the rock. Her romance had begun when she looked through the plate-glass window of the barber shop. It had ended when Gloria let go of the life clenched in her tiny fists. And all that came after was the worm crawling monotonously through the earth, the worm that had once tasted honey in the bud of a flower.

"And you shouldn't go crazy buying from drummers," Moses was advising Sam, "but buy only what you need to fill in." Moses was pleased to give Sam a good deal of sage advice. He was full of wisdom, rich experience in storekeeping; but that experience and wisdom were for other people rather than for himself. He felt important telling Sam how to carry on his business, and he wandered restlessly from one room of the house to another, thrusting his hands in his pockets, pulling them out again, banging them on convenient tables, lifting them high in the air. Sam listened almost aggressively; his ears were funnels through whose width experience and wisdom poured into his head. He was done with the newspaper office forever, done with machinery and oil and damp paper. Sam did not love merchandise with the intense passion of Moses and Joseph, but he was close and meticulous. He would save his dollars, feel his way carefully, and in the end he would be called a wise man, and Moses would be dead and forgotten. After a few years, Sam would own property in Anaconda and his store would be doing a large business. And Moses would be dead in the cemetery, a man who used his merchandise and his religion prodigally, squandering them through the rich, vivid days.

Rachel believed that she would have other children, sons and daughters of Sam, and perhaps she would love them, too. Perhaps she would think she was living fully. But she would be deceived. Her life had ended, she knew. She

would lie with Sam and their children would be conceived, but they would be nights of the earth and not of the sky, not of the snowflakes fluttering down from the clouds, whimsical, compact of ecstasy. She would cook for Sam, she would clean his house, bear his children, listen to his troubles, but it would be as the worm crawling through the soil. Blessed worm that is blind and doesn't know where it is going and, what is more, doesn't care! But once she had been a nymph in the spring and danced along the first green lanes of the year. . . . The way Boris slept, the way his hair felt against her eyes. . . . The old saleslady looking across the counter in the infants' wear department. . . . Gloria playing that the soap in the tub was a ship. . . . Gloria holding two balls of life in her fist and then letting them go. . . .

She hoped that she would not remember too much.

Moses invited nearly all the Jews in Silver Bow to Rachel's wedding. Because the first had not been a real wedding, he said, and such a pretty girl as Rachel should have the best. He would show all his friends he was no piker, and he would have a big piece in all the papers. Straller-Singermann. Maybe Rachel would get enough presents to give her children and her children's children. That was the kind of wedding to have, not a Justice of the Peace, a few words, a kiss and it is over. A wedding should be a wedding, said Moses.

TEN: DAVID

Everybody said, "That David, he's the happy one of the family." When he was younger, he had a plump body and he was soft and cheerful and always laughing. He did not belong to the Singermanns at all, people said. His disposition was like Sol's brown hair, they weren't Singermann at all. But Sol's hair had grown darker and darker, and his shoulders had always been strong and heavy like his father's. Sol was a Singermann after all. It would have been fine to have had someone in the family who was out of the way, a different colored thread in the pattern. But here was Sol so changed from when he was a child, and David beginning to fall in love. Only he was so happy at first.

Coming over on the boat from Roumania, David had caught a severe cold that had settled in his head and affected his hearing slightly. Pockets of pus gathered in his ears and tortured him at odd moments of the day. You would have thought an affliction such as this would have soured David. But it didn't, so much. You would always hear him laughing above everyone else, good honest laughter that made a lot of noise. The other Singermanns were self-conscious in their mirth and they laughed on the surface, as if a bit ashamed of themselves. But David, it was a holy joy sometimes to hear him laugh. Your heart warmed to him. He was so plump and jolly, and when he grew older and thinned down, he was really beautiful, and people said, "That David. He's a man. He's a man to sleep with."

The other Singermanns were falling in love tragically.

It seemed as though love was another name for Hell in their lives, even if Hell seemed Heaven in love's intensity. But here was David falling in love many times and laughing about it, laughing out the pain of it. He had a fine singing voice, rich and hearty, a man's voice—not a suspicious effeminate tenor, not the sort of voice a blond vaudeville actor has. When David sang, dark brown ale poured out of him, and it made a fine man sound that crept over you and seduced you warmly. A rich, husky voice and fine lungs and arms that could hold an armful of woman and make life pleasant for her. David said that he might have a lot of kids somewhere, he didn't know about that. He told this to a traveling man and laughed out loud. "Everywhere I've gone I might have a lot of kids, I wouldn't be surprised."

But it had always been understood that some day David would marry Lina Bachmann, that dark daughter of the ex-policeman. The Bachmanns and Singermanns had always been friendly because they had come from the same part of Roumania. Mrs. Bachmann used to bring Lina over to the Singermanns and show her off. And when the Singermanns went to call on the Bachmanns, it was Lina who made the black coffee. She took a bag of rich, brown coffee beans and spilled them into the coffee mill and began grinding. Her strong arms turned the handle smoothly and the beans were ground into delicious, odoriferous coffee that permeated into you and gave you many arguments right under your tongue. That's what coffee should do, and these people who drink milk because coffee is poison, what sort of fools are they? Are they fine, upstanding men and women or babes sucking at their mothers' breasts?

Lina was not David's end. She had been chosen for him by the Bachmann and Singermann families, and he was fond of her, but she was not his piercing cry, his cry to

Heaven. He had not yet come upon the woman who was to lead him into underground tunnels of life where he had never been before. And so he went about with Lina and was content. He bought her a diamond engagement ring that cost one hundred twenty-five dollars, and Lina put it on and showed it everywhere, at kaffee-klatches and charity balls and everywhere. The ring sparkled and shone and nobody knew that it had a flaw. Lina could not go to bed with it, for she had heard that sleeping with an engagement ring meant children who would be idiots. But first thing in the morning, she slipped the ring on her finger and waved her hand in the sunlight before the mirror. Lina loved David. When he came in the evening, she led him into the kitchen and spilled the coffee beans into the mill and she turned the handle. She made the mill growl with complete satisfaction. David loved to watch her, and the smell of coffee sank into his soul, so that he never smelled fine coffee but what he thought of Lina, her black hair, the hairpins studded with certain green stones. He liked to take her in his arms and hurt her. He would twist her elbows behind her, and she would cry out in pain and slap him. The pain she felt was comfortable and kindly. Afterward, when David had gone for good, Lina would feel that pain in her elbows and she would grit her teeth in desperation. A diamond ring and a man who took you in his arms and warmed you with his heaviness, the proximity of his luscious manhood, and drinking black coffee with him from thin china cups: Lina never knew such happiness after David had gone.

He really didn't give a thought to his engagement. The ring had cost him a hundred twenty-five dollars at Ed Rosen's, whose rings sparkled and glimmered in the finest show cases in Silver Bow, and that much money is something to think about. But David was satisfied. Lina was pleasant to sit with. He liked to take her in his arms and

to walk out with her. She was such a good home girl, he couldn't help thinking a lot of her. He would bring his cornet to her house and blow his deep, thrilling breath into the horn. He did not play the cornet well, not as well as a player in an orchestra, but he got a lot of fun out of it. He would blow at his cornet and Lina, at the piano, would sing:

Good night, dear
Sleep tight, dear . . .

And she would look up at him, but his eyes were bulging with exertion. Then, after they had finished, he would take the cornet apart and blow the spit out. It was nice to be with Lina. But often, when David left her house, he would go down to Galena Street and see the girls there. A lusty fellow like David, rich with juices, he had to have his arms about a girl at night. He couldn't live thinking of Lina. He had to enjoy himself meanwhile. People who saw David down there on Galena Street would bring stories to Moses.

"That boy of yours. Keep an eye on him. Here he is engaged to Lina Bachmann and he goes down there with the bad girls. It's a shame for a Jewish boy, and what would Lina Bachmann say if she knew?"

"A dark year on you!" Moses thundered at David. "You go with the *shiksas,* you waste yourself on them and then what will happen to you? I'll throw you out from the store! *Toiber!* Deaf one!"

But down there with the golden girls, David had his good times, and he didn't care what his father said. He had warm flesh and was full of songs. But he was as the wind, carried anywhere by a pretty face. It was good to hear him laugh. It was terrible when he came to weep. For he wept just as he laughed, with a child's heart, utterly giving himself to his emotion.

When he was in the store with the shoes and the underwear and the neckties and the lunch buckets and the hip boots, David worked hard and gave all his mind and body to business. He was not distracted by thoughts of beauty as Louis was, although he was keenly susceptible to beauty when he saw it. But he had to see it first, whereas Louis was dreaming about the beauty far away, over there in Paris or in Russia or beyond the horizon down in the South Seas. Louis would walk down a street, and a tree would set him off thinking about a Japanese print he had once seen, the silver delicacy of the lines that the artist had drawn. But David saw the beauty of the tree and stopped and watched it, and said, "Now that's a pretty sight, a tree like that." And afterward he would forget about the tree, and perhaps he would never think of it again. He would think of other things, the lines of a suit of clothes, or the color of a woman's hair. But the suit wouldn't make him think of walking down Fifth Avenue on Easter Sunday, and the woman's hair would only make him think that he would like to have the woman.

David was not so imaginative, not so wild in his thoughts as Louis; and he was the more easily conquered because his thoughts did not take wings. Louis might fall in love, but it would not be with a material object so much as the glamour that the object shed through his mind and heart. But when David fell in love, he was in love with a person and not with the thoughts that the person made him think. Not so much, anyway. Louis had always been in love with beauty. There had never been a moment when he was not in love with the look of a city street, a road in the country, a girl sitting near him in the theater, a girl in a department store. David had many loves and not one of them made any deep impression on him until he met Maxine. He was not in love with Lina, but he liked to be near her, to take her in his arms, to tickle her, and

to smell her. He was unawakened until he met Maxine. And after he once knew Maxine he forgot about everything he had ever known; and he never loved another woman for the rest of his life; and he could not even bear the thought of sleeping with another woman.

Maxine was a bad woman. She had lived with her father on his farm in Iowa, but she had never seen fields of corn bending in the wind. She had never heard a whippoorwill the way a whippoorwill should be heard, the music of its call framed in haunting sadness. Her father had been a widower and had married again when Maxine was fourteen. The second wife was a religious woman who read the Bible, and that sure made Maxine sore to have a woman around always reading the Bible. It was bad enough that you had to live on a farm; but to have your stepmother looking like the wrath of Jehovah, her long blue nose buried in Genesis, that was too much. Maxine just told her father where he could get off. She suddenly developed a passion for her dead mother, and she told her father he had a hell of a nerve getting married again. He didn't like Maxine to talk that way, and neither did the stepmother. "And I just told them both to go to Hell and went to Chicago."

She had never caught the fragrance of the soil in the early morning and she had never seen the fields of corn, because all the time she was on the farm she longed to get away to the city. And when she got to Chicago a man did her dirt, and that started her off on the wrong way, and before long she was in the cribs of Silver Bow. Maxine was ambitious and beautiful and a man took her out of the cribs and put her up in a furnished room in the Ansonia Block on West Park Street. The man was killed in a mine accident, and Maxine went bad again. Then she met David.

David had been to a meeting of the Elks, and afterwards he walked down Granite Street in the sulphurous

night of Silver Bow. Lina had a cold tonight and she wasn't so pleasing to have around. She coughed and blew her nose until it was red and David couldn't make love to her. So he was walking down the street and he met an old friend, Steve Kenelly, who was a motorman on the Meaderville street car. Some weeks before a friend with a Brownie camera had taken a picture of David and Steve standing together in front of the car barns, and David had worn Steve's motorman cap, and Steve had worn David's derby. They stood arm in arm while someone took their picture with a Brownie camera. When you have your picture taken that way with a fellow, you are his friend, and he is yours, and you keep the picture a long time, until one day, years after, someone asks you, "Who is that fellow with your derby?" And you say, "That fellow was a good friend of mine, Steve Kenelly, who was a motorman on the street cars. But now he's gone back East to New York, and I think he's in the contracting business there, but I don't know. He was a funny fellow, a good friend of mine, and that day the picture was taken, I was wearing his motorman cap and he was wearing my derby."

That night after he had left the Elks Building, David met Steve Kenelly, and Steve said, "You old bastard, what you doing? There's a dame up in the Ansonia Block, a blonde, who's a swell kid, and you ought to meet her. Oh, say, she's the candy kid."

"I like blondes," said David. "But you know I'm engaged to be married to Lina Bachmann. I bought her a ring at Ed Rosen's, cost me a hundred and twenty-five plunkers. But I know it's a good ring."

"Lina's a nice girl," said Steve Kenelly. "I think you did a very good thing, and you better not come up to see this kid, Maxine. She's hot plaster."

"Why shouldn't I go, you son-of-a-bitch? I'm always

willing to meet a girl if she's a blonde. They're my weakness." David and Steve walked arm in arm down Granite Street until they came to Main, and then they turned south and finally stopped in front of the Ansonia Block. They went in together and ascended in the elevator to the third floor. If Louis had been in the elevator, lifetimes would have passed for him. Each floor would have been a lifetime of wondering, What kind of girl is this Maxine? What's going to happen to me after I meet her? But David only thought that he was going to meet a blonde who was hot stuff, and that was enough for him. It was all that his mind could hold at one time.

Steve rang the bell of her room, 312, and there was no answer for a long time. He rang again and again. "She may be busy," said Steve, and David laughed at that. They were about to turn back to the elevator, when Maxine called, "Who's that?" and Steve answered, "It's me, Steve Kenelly," and Maxine laughed, "Gee whiz, I was taking a bath. Wait a minute."

"It's hell on a poor girl to call on her when she's taking a bath," said David. "She must be cold."

"Well, she's clean anyway," said Steve.

Maxine had covered herself with a flowered silk kimono, and when she opened the door, David's eyes followed the outlines of her figure through the silk. He saw her heavy, damp golden hair that gave off a fragrance of bath salts. David told himself that he had never seen such a beautiful girl, and he tried to think of all the girls he had seen, but Maxine crowded them away. He followed Steve into the room, an ordinary room in a Silver Bow block with its shoddy carpet on which the carnations had been worn thin by the restless footsteps of many lodgers, its insecure looking "bureau," its inevitable picture of a wholesome Cupid. In this tawdriness, Maxine was opulent, a golden flower in full bloom. She was a tall, handsome figure, and

her health seemed to be singing out of her. She moved about in a golden haze of health. Her blood seemed to run gurgling through her veins. There was temper in her, and stubbornness, and a hard vulgarity. She was twenty-four now, and almost ten years had passed since she had left her father's farm in Iowa. Ten years of men, of getting to know their ways, their weaknesses, their little selfish traits. She had lived with many and had been deserted by some, and some she had left of her own accord. She tired of them quickly, but most of all she tired of their sentimentality. They wanted her for always, but for always on the sly. They told her intimate secrets about their dreams and desires. Most of them wanted comfortable homes, but they did not want Maxine in their comfortable homes, sitting by their firesides. They never mentioned Maxine in their wills. They wanted her on the sly. And on the sly they would come to her and tell her what damn fools they were and how much they loved their children. If my little Dorothy knew the kind of life I was leading on the sly! Maxine hated men and she was twenty-four and the next man she got would have money.

She had just stepped out of the bath, and where her arms were free of the kimono, David saw how golden they were, how round and strong. He saw the beads of perspiration on her upperlip, hanging like pearls, and when she came close to him he could smell the sweat under her arms, and he was overcome by a sickness of lust. She was almost as tall as he was, and David could see the curving lines of her hips making the bright, barbaric kimono sing with ecstasy as she moved about. Women like Maxine loved kimonos. They go into expensive shops and let their fingers run through silk underthings, pink and apple-green and pale rose, things they love to wear next their skin so that they feel smooth and sweet under their clothes. They ask for a kimono and the word falls lovingly from their

lips, suggesting warm boudoirs heavy with scent and fat pink roses and fluffy white powder-puffs to pass over their naked shoulders and breasts. An Oriental kimono, madame, imported from Yokohama, made by the Japanese. You will look stunning in it. The flowers will bloom in gorgeous colors on your breasts, your hips, your calves. Maxine's finger nails were polished to rose and they looked as if they had been dipped into vessels of fragrant blood. But her face was healthy-looking, and not from rouge; and her hair was heavy with ponderous sunshine and was damp and thick and fell over her white forehead when she stooped. The slightest movement of her arms, her breasts, her hips, brought a new, exciting pattern of beauty before David's eyes. She walked about the room in slippers that had blue chrysanthemums stitched into the toes, and her feet made a teasing, tantalizing sound as she shuffled here and there, shaking the wet out of her hair, lifting her hands so that the finger nails caught the lights of the chandelier and looked like pale rubies. David could not take his eyes off her. His eyes followed her about the room, and when she disappeared into the alcove, his eyes knew what she was doing in there. She was stooping, swaying, and the lines of her body were writing a sensual language of enticement through the silken kimono.

David thought that she had gone into the alcove to dress, and he was sorry. She might have beautiful clothes, but what were they when they hid that glowing, vivid body? But she came back into his vision just as she had left it, and she smiled at him. Her teeth were white and even, and when she smiled there was an odd sweetness about her, suggesting the thought that she was good. And since there is a child in everyone, even those who have passed from man to man for ten years, there was a child in Maxine when she smiled. But she smiled so rarely. She did not think that there were many things in the world to smile

about. She laughed often, but her laughter was something distinctly apart from her smile. When she smiled, she was sad and somehow the girl who might have been if her life had journeyed to a different place. When she laughed, she was the woman who knew too much about men, the way they looked just before they put out the light, the way they breathed just before their bodies touched hers. But coming out of the alcove, she had seen David sitting there in a certain way, and for a moment all her life had disappeared and she saw a boy she could love. She saw his wavy black hair with just a touch of blue about it and his large brown eyes and his fine, slim figure. And she thought of herself walking beside him and saying, "But I couldn't. You're mistaken in me. You think I'm that sort—but I'm not. You're quite mistaken." And then she looked at him more intently and saw that he was lusting for her, and she laughed.

"I don't think I ever seen you before," she said. "You lived long in this town?"

"Nearly all my life," said David. "You been here long?"

"Off and on. I want to go to California. I got friends there. Los Angeles is Heaven on earth. People think they live in this town. The smoke in this town 'll give anybody galloping consumption in six months' time. It's like serving a term in the pen. Honest to God, if I don't get the pip—"

But she didn't look as if she would ever get the pip, clothed as she was in that golden haze of health. Her limbs sang with a fine golden rhythm when she walked. She was a goddess to David. He had seen so many women of her class that he had ceased to differentiate them from any other class. He did not think of her as being respectable or bad. He thought of her only as a golden woman in tune with his desires.

"You're certainly good-lookin'," she told David. "Steve, your friend is good-lookin'. Jewish, ain't you? I don't know

why, but your kind of Jewish face is my ideal. Those brown eyes, kind of sad and deep, no Christian ever has 'em. I seen enough men to know, believe me. Jews has been my best friends. I'll say this about Jews. They're square with women. Every time, by God. They love women and children. And show me the man who loves women and children, and I'll say, 'There's a man.'"

Maxine talked this way, but all the time she was thinking, He's a Jew, and probably he's got money. They usually have. And they ain't so tight with it, not the young ones, anyway. From what I know about Jews, they don't make any great splurge in this town, but they've always got plenty of kale in the bank. But Maxine was not lying when she told David that she thought him handsome. She meant it. She saw many men, and they were mostly alike to her, but David stood out immediately in her consciousness. She liked the dreamy look of his face, the poetry of his eyes, the dark, tropic splendor of his hair.

"You're the best-looking girl I ever saw," said David. The Oriental in him cried out for her fairness, her Northern, brilliant whiteness. He was used to dark people. He had been born into a dark family, and most of his associates were dark. He seemed to have learned all about dark people, their little, secretive ways, the network of their intimate lives, the way they ate, slept, and talked. Dark people were familiar things in a familiar world, things close to you that you slept with and lived by. You could take dark people apart and put them together again, bit by bit, every bone and sense and nerve in its right place. But fair people were like strange, splendid words in a book that you were reading for the first time and couldn't quite make out. They were creatures from the stars up there in the sky walking for the first time on this planet; and the places they walked glittered and shone after them. Pale lilies you met on unfamiliar paths, white lilacs that give

off a new, bewildering fragrance, were fair people. They had strange ways and strange voices and you wanted to have them for your very own in the same way you wanted new kinds of toys when you were a child. To put a blonde person in a dark house would be thrilling. Would a fair person talk like a dark one, sing the same songs, think out the same things to say? David looked at Maxine and thought that if he had children by her they would be beautiful and strange, and he would like to have them around the house. Little girls with flaxen hair and blue eyes, and little boys with hair the color of hay in the fields and odd gray eyes. He would never send such children away from him, but he would look into their minds and find out about them under the yellow hair.

So Steve Kenelly got up and said he would go out and get some sandwiches at the delicatessen store on the corner, and a couple of bottles of Budweiser. But Maxine said that she was tired and didn't care to eat so soon after she had taken a bath. "It lays heavy on my stomach," said Maxine.

So Steve arose and said that he might as well be going then, because he had to get up early tomorrow morning and start out on a new route. They had taken the Meaderville cars away from him and were putting him on the Columbia Gardens route. So David got up too, and said that as long as Steve was going he might as well be moseying along.

Maxine didn't waste much time telling Steve good night. She took the tips of his fingers in her own in a most perfunctory way. Steve walked out into the hall and it came David's turn to say good night. Maxine held out her hand to him. "Come back when you get rid of your friend," she said. "I'd like to know a lot of things about you, Brown Eyes. Where was you born, and why? And, oh say, bring back some sandwiches and a couple of bottles of Budweiser." All this was said in a low voice, a husky golden

whisper that came as honey from between her pale red lips. David loved her firm, practical mouth. The dark people he knew had heavy red lips, soft and voluptuous, but Maxine's mouth was long and hard and pale red.

David thought that he and Maxine had a secret between them. His heart was filled with excitement and ran away from the rest of him, and he pursued glowing with a tremulous exaltation. He and Steve went down in the elevator together, and when they got outside on the sidewalk, Steve said, "Well, I guess I'll go home and snooze," and David said, "Me, too." So they parted in front of the Ansonia Block, but as Steve turned away, he called back at David, "Be sure the beer is cold," and David felt sorry for Steve going back by himself to his rooming house up there on East Granite Street near the copper mines. He certainly owed Steve something for having introduced him to Maxine. It was mighty generous of Steve to do a think like that. He would try to get Steve into the Elks. They were particular lately about who they let in, and a lot of people had been blackballed. But David would speak up for Steve, because Steve was mighty white and the kind of man who would make a good Elk.

Sandwiches and cold beer. Beer so cold that the bottles pained him as he held the parcel against his breast. He knocked on the door and Maxine called, "In a minute!" laughingly, as though she were full of the devil there behind the door. Then she let David in and he saw that she had changed her kimono for a deep red dressing gown that trailed after her on the floor. She was so handsome, her complexion was so clear and fine that she could wear most colors successfully. "Oh, God, you're a great kid, Brown Eyes!" she greeted him, taking the beer and sandwiches from his arms. "Sit down on the couch, honey, while I take these things." She went into the alcove, singing,

I love you like a Dago loves bananas,
Just like a little newsboy loves a pie.
I love you like a drummer loves Havanas,
If I don't love you, Mame, I hope to die!
I love you like a sailor loves the seashore,
I love you like a miser loves his coin,
Just like a gambler loves the Tenderloin
I love you!
Say, that's how I love you, Mame!

She came back into the room with two glasses of ice-cold beer and a plate of sandwiches. She pushed a table near the couch and seated herself beside David, suddenly overwhelming him with her nearness. She reached for a sandwich and playfully attempted to push it all in his mouth, and they struggled for a minute on the couch, laughing and shouting. Then she gave him the beer and it stimulated him all the way down into his stomach, a bubbling, incandescent stream of cold beer. How he loved it!

"I'm glad Steve's gone home," said Maxine. "Now we can talk among ourselves cosy and nice."

"Steve's a good kid, Maxine."

"Yaa, but he hangs around and he hangs around and he never knows when to leave. He'd be a nice fellow if he didn't keep hanging around."

"Well, he's a good kid and I'm going to try to get him in the Elks."

"What do you do for a livin', David?"

"I work with my father in the store. It's that place on East Park Street. I don't know if you ever saw it."

"Is it that store with all the stuff outside. Big sale today?"

"Yaa."

"Say, that's a big store. I bet you do a big business."

"Well, we did a bigger business before Joe—that's my oldest brother—opened a place across the street."

"Say, it's swell to have a business of your own, I bet," said Maxine. "It's a good thing you don't work for somebody else. I s'pose you'll have a lot of money some day."

"Well, I wouldn't say that."

"Look at poor me, havin' to struggle along."

"You don't look like you're struggling along."

"A girl's got to keep up a certain appearance. In this town you're judged by your clothes. The women dress swell in this town. They don't dress any better in New York or California than they dress in this town."

"Gee, these sandwiches are good," said David. "I like a neat sandwich like this."

"They're pretty good," Maxine agreed. "Wait till you eat my cookin'. If there's one thing I do good, it's cookin'."

"I bet you do."

"You come around some night and I'll make dinner for you. I hate to cook, but I like everything right. I go to a lot of trouble but I hate things halfway. When I set a table, everything is the best I can make it. I take pains and I work myself up real nervous and it makes me sick. I'm like that when it comes to cookin'. Say, we don't live long and we might as well eat the best."

David could feel the velvet of her dressing gown against his wrist, soft and sleepy in its touch. He was close enough to see how her nostrils dilated and quivered. They were angry, disdainful nostrils, but sensitive. In repose, her features were just a bit combative, quivering and sharpening to her moods. Yet she was beautiful to David. Vulgarity in women touched some deep chord within him that softness, refinement could not reach. He was keenly susceptible to the animal in women when they were angry. He was taken by a deep, sensual surprise when the animal attacked from ambush, and the pain of surrender had something delicious in it. Lina, who was meek and soft looking was someone to talk to and walk with, but she was always a

good girl to him, and he could feel no delicious pain when he was with her. Maxine was dreadfully close to him from the first moment he saw her; her flesh was close to him, her sex was something he must explore. She was more than exciting to him. She was terribly charming. She was a perilous peak he must ascend, a turbulent river he must swim even though he despair in the rapidity and violence of the whirlpool.

After an hour, she was leaning back, her blonde head against the wall, talking about herself. "I've had a hard life," she was saying. "I left home when I was fifteen and I had to shift for myself. I've always wanted a home of my own with a yard and a big kitchen and nice furniture. I want a piano."

"Do you play?" asked David.

"No. But I love to have a piano around. It adds so much to a room. A swell baby grand? There's nothin like a piano."

"I play the cornet," said David.

"No. Honest? Gee whiz, imagine you playing the cornet. Bring it around some time. I sure love music. There's a swell pianola I saw at Orten's the other day just three hundred dollars. You know. A lot of times I get nervous and I'd just like to relax and listen to music. It soothes me more than anything I know. I'd just like to sit around evenings in my negligee and listen to music. I ain't so strong for parties and shows. These society women what run around this town, they just make me sick. It's all right for kids. But you get so tired of it. After a while, the same thing over an' over again until your bones ache. There's a whole lot in sittin' quiet and relaxin'. That's why I'd like to have a pianola."

"You say it was at Orten's?" asked David.

"What?"

"You said you saw a pianola at Orten's for three hundred dollars."

"Yaa." Maxine sat up straight on the couch and she took David's hand and played with his fingers. "Why do you ask, Brown Eyes?"

"Well, I might buy it."

The words had come to him unbidden. Three hundred dollars was too much for him to spend, and if his father should hear of it there would be the devil to pay. The words had just come out of his mouth, and now he was a little amazed at himself.

"That's real nice of you," she said. "You're awful generous, ain't you?" She laughed. "But say, do you think I'd let you buy that pianola for me? I should say not. Now don't be foolish. I was only joking. I don't hardly know you."

"I'll get the pianola just the same. I like music myself," insisted David.

"Say, you're stubborn," and she snuggled close to him and kissed his cheek. "When you make up your mind to do a thing, nothin' can change you, can it? We'll be good friends, huh, Dave? Gee, you're a sweet boy. I could be real lovin' to you."

David put his arms about her and closed his eyes. His flesh was enchanted with her proximity and he felt shackled to her. He had never felt this way before. He had gone to women and they had appeased his importunate desires, but there had always been the feeling that he was a gay dog having a good time. He had left them and was free of them. But this fair beauty of Maxine's, this dreadful attraction was making him a prisoner. The strangeness of her was a great fear in him. He was afraid of Maxine, afraid that she would keep him, afraid that he would lose her. He had entered her room a free man, but he was no longer free and never again would he be free. She was taking his senses and playing them. She was running her fingers over them as she would run her fingers

over the keys of a piano. She was taking his senses,—touch, smell, hearing, sight,—and she was putting them away in her and he could not take them away again because he was afraid and because he had lost his energy. He had come into the room with Steve and had lived a whole lifetime in a few hours and he would never leave the room as he had entered it. They used to say of David, "How jolly he is, what a great big boy full of jokes and without a worry in the world." Well, he could never be jolly again. No life prisoner can be jolly.

He drew her closer and she did not resist him. He did not know that her pleasure was much less than his own. She had been with many men and was old to these things, and to be taken in a man's arms was a habit, a matter of course, something that made the time pass for her. All these things were true of her, and yet she loved David tonight. He was different from the men she had known and he seemed to have a splendid future. She had known Jews all her life and she thought them more considerate of their women than Gentiles. Most of the Jews she had known had been well-off. Money had come to them with apparent ease. It was easy for her to believe that David's family had money. If she had known that they were only middling in their prosperity, if she had realized that money was hard for them, she certainly would not have gone so far with David. But she did love him that night. She loved him as far as she could go, but she could not go very far in love now. There had been a time some years before when she had really loved, and the affair had been disastrous, a tragedy. After that episode she had grown hard and vulgar, and she could not reach back to the girl she had been. There were times when she thought that she might love again. There were certain days and nights when she really loved. As she lay in David's arms, she loved him in her way, which was with her body and

her mind, but not with her heart. His body was strong and vital to her, and her mind was playing with the thought of his family's wealth. And so she went with him and enjoyed him, and his pleasure was dreadful. He ascended to the peak of ecstasy, of forgetfulness. And she was often in ecstasy, but never altogether forgetful. She could not reach back that far.

He had been such a happy man, so free and careless with his golden laughter. Now he was conscience-stricken and haunted by fears. His ways were blind. He was engaged to Lina Bachmann. The ring he had purchased for her was on her finger for all the world to see. Their marriage date had been set. The evenings they spent together now were swept by winds of cold doubt. They were hollow evenings, separate entities that did not connect into a sequence of well-being and assurance. Always he was drawn to Maxine. He lived a lie both ways, ashamed to tell Lina the truth, afraid to tell Maxine of his engagement. The strain of carrying on such a deception was beginning to tell on David. Mornings, he dreaded getting out of bed because he saw each hour before him assaulted by deceit, each hour bleeding to death. He wanted to stay in bed under the covers, as if they were an armor to shield him from life and love. Not so long ago he had been a child, safe and secure. Was it possible that he had grown up and fallen in love? Every morning David would open his eyes on the terrible day with its questions. Are you going to tell Lina the truth? Are you going to tell her that you cannot live without Maxine, that you must have Maxine near you for the rest of your life? Are you going to tell Maxine that you can't see her any more because you are engaged to Lina? You grew up to be a man and you became intimate with women, and you wanted one for a wife because she would make you comfortable, and you

wanted another because you could not live without her. Oh, if only during the night the years would turn their faces about, and by morning you were a child again with young flesh and clear pleasures! The flesh of a child does not burn to a woman's caress and can show itself unscarred and singing, in the morning and the night.

David went about his work listlessly. He grew thin all over his body. His face lost its color. His eyes stung others with their brightness. He lost sales and was mercilessly upbraided by his father. He turned from the bawdy jokes of the traveling men because he felt himself a character in a bawdy joke that was far from funny. He was beginning to understand what had gone on in the minds of Joseph and Rachel and Louis. He explored the fringes of their lives and tried to put himself in their places. Joseph could not help being the slave of his store. Rachel could not help her love for Boris. She had been unable to breathe life back into her dead child. What would he have done in Louis's place in Spokane? David thought of his father who had plucked grapes and made wine in Roumania. He thought of his mother and knew that no man could put himself in a woman's place and feel her pain when she gave birth to a child. Yet to look at men and women as they walked past you on the street, you could not know the extent of their pain, the distance of their longing. This man had an inner pain of frustrated love and this man had an outer wretchedness of disease. This woman had given birth to a child she had not wanted, and this woman had explored the farthest reaches of solitude because she was childless. All these men and women are members of the Singermann family, and that is very strange. Yet to look at them as they walked past you on the street, you could not know the extent of their pain, the distance of their longing.

He had bought Maxine the pianola at Orten's and their

affair had stretched itself out for five months. Each night he spent with her, he was more firmly bound to her by his senses; and yet he continued to see Lina as though he were going to marry her. But one night he had promised to marry Maxine. She was in his arms and she had whispered to him that she wanted a home and he had promised to marry her. So that now he was engaged to two women, and neither knew the other.

David loved Maxine with every nerve. She turned him inside out so that he was revealed to her minutely, dreadfully. She could do with him anything she chose, and he was in mortal fear of her. Such was his stupor when he was with her that he could not say which was fear and which was ecstasy. Fear and ecstasy were one when he was with Maxine. And yet he would leave her with sickness in his heart and go to Lina for rest and consolation, that rest and consolation she could give without understanding him. He felt pity for himself and pity for Lina. But he could not feel anything but blind, stubborn, witless worship for Maxine.

One night he came to Maxine, and he could see in her face that she had found out about Lina. He came into her room and saw her sitting on the couch, and the wave of bitterness, of anger that emanated from her made him tremble. When he approached her she rose quickly, and he felt that he was in the presence of a gorgeously colored snake, one of those monstrous, fascinating reptiles you see in circus wagons, extraordinarily beautiful in their varieties of designs. You look and look at them, and you are afraid, yet you cannot move away.

"Don't you come near me!" Maxine spat out at him. "You just take your dirty, God-damned feet out of my room!"

If the snake should fling itself through the glass of the wagon and hurl itself upon you, then you would feel the life being slowly crushed out of your body. There you would

stand, and the horribly beautiful coils would be about your limbs, your memories, and your desires. You would look close at the skin, the designs within designs, the colors within colors. How had the snake come by such beauty? How could anything so low and venomous be so terribly fascinating, so splendid in its horror? It crawled, it was low in the world, and it knew the swamps, the viscid gloom of the unutterable jungles. No artist could ever contrive such stripes, such sinister patterns of gorgeous reds and yellows, vivid, flashing, tearing out your eyes.

David threw himself blindly on the couch and buried his head away from her. Maxine stood over him, and though he could not see her reality, he saw her dreadfully in his blindness. "You dirty skunk!" she cried. "All the time you been hangin' around me you've had a girl. I s'pose I ain't good enough for you, is that it? You just get out of my room, you dog!" She was screaming, tugging at him where he lay with his head buried in his arms. "Don't, Maxine," he pleaded. "Don't send me away."

He feared her. He knew the awful fits of her temper; and yet he loved her so that he felt he would die if he should lose her. In a fit of temper, Maxine was a mad woman, but far more dangerous than those who have been locked away in asylums. Their madness moves in furious circles and rarely reaches an objective; but Maxine was just sane enough so that her madness was a danger. It moved out of her in straight, sharp lines and was aimed deliberately at a target. Throughout her formative years she had lived with clods and prostitutes, and the anger she had acquired from them was without intelligence and terrible in its acknowledgment of inferiority. The men and women with whom Maxine had been most intimate had not been rational creatures. If you pricked a clod, he remained dumb for a time; but if you pricked him again and again, his anger was suddenly a destroying madness. If you wronged a prostitute she flew at

you like an animal, because the beast is her sharpest-edged weapon against the world.

"Don't send me away," pleaded David. "I couldn't live without you."

"And you'll go and marry Lina Bachmann!" Maxine screamed at him. "What kind of a dog are you that you come around me with your lies and all the time you're engaged to another girl?"

"I couldn't help that," said David, removing his hands from his eyes and sitting up wearily on the couch. "I had to get engaged to her because my family wanted it. But I knew I couldn't go through with marrying her after I met you." He sighed brokenly.

"Say," Maxine asked, "what kind of a damn fool do you think I am, anyway?" She leaned over and began shaking him and he could see the madness in her eyes. "Do you think you're too good for me? I'm as good as any woman in this town!"

"I never said you wasn't," said David. He began to weep and sniffle up his nose. It was awful to watch him at such moments, for he was a grown man and wept like a child. It was a humiliation below all humiliations to be weeping like this before the woman he loved. It was like burying himself under a pile of manure. When he had been a child, and on Hallowe'en night the rowdies had tumbled over the outhouse in the back yard, and the next morning he and his brothers had set the shack right over the hole—that had been a terrible humiliation. But sitting here and crying in front of the woman he loved, the woman he had mastered physically, this was the most humiliating thing that had ever happened to him.

"You sit there and sniffle like this was your house, as if you belonged here," Maxine shot out at him. "You get the hell out of here."

He broke into new sobs. He was all weak and didn't

amount to a dirty cent. He was nothing. He was something for her to walk on. He slipped off the couch on to his knees and caught at her dress. "Don't send me away," he sobbed.

This terrible enigma of love. David was in love with Maxine who had slept with more men than she had ever kept count of. A man falls in love with the way a woman's skirts hang, with the way she stoops, and the sounds she makes when they are having sexual intercourse. If he sees her in a beautiful light, against the sky, or smelling a flower or smiling sweetly, he is in love with her, too, but no more in love than when she is cutting her nails or blowing her nose. David feared Maxine now, but he felt that he had never loved her so frantically. Because he could not express his sadness, his fear in any other way, he sobbed, he who had been so full of laughter just a few months before.

"I'll tell Lina tomorrow," he whimpered. "I'll tell her that our engagement is off and that I'm going to marry you. Only don't send me away."

"Well, get up then, for Jesus Christ sake," said Maxine. "Quit sniveling. If you think a woman likes a man to make a baby out of himself, you're crazy. Ain't you got no manhood?"

"We can be married tomorrow," said David with intense excitement. He brushed the tears out of his eyes and rose to his feet and looked like a dog awaiting the word of its master. "Oh, Maxine, I love you!" he murmured and took her in his arms, but she pushed him away. She was thinking of *Zaza* with Mrs. Leslie Carter and *Camille* with Sarah Bernhardt that time the French actress had played on the Flat under a tent. She was thinking that she was Zaza and Camille rolled into one, but David was hardly the man to play opposite her heroine. She no longer loved him the little bit she had loved him. Any man who got down on his knees like that and cried like a baby aroused in her only contempt.

But she had made up her mind to marry him and she was going through with it. She was tired of living in a furnished room and making her money by taking on men. She wanted a home of her own with new furniture and an automobile that she could drive and winter trips to California. David might not be so rich, but he could afford that much. She wanted to go into shops and buy silk underwear and dresses and not have to worry about paying for them. Most men of means would not care to marry her, and so she must take the best she could find.

"Go in the bathroom and get washed up," she said to David. "I got some beer on the ice. Or is your sweet patootie waitin' for you?"

"I'm through with her," he mumbled. "I won't have another thing to do with her. Didn't I tell you that I had to get engaged to her because my parents wanted it?"

"What about the ring you give her?"

"Oh, she can have it, I guess. She can keep the ring."

"Ain't you the generous Lothario? You buy a diamond ring and give it to a girl and then you say she can keep it. Say. Ask her for the ring."

"Well, I might do that," said David brokenly. But he knew that he could never ask Lina for the engagement ring. Perhaps she would return it. . . . The Bachmanns would hardly let her do that. They would be angry and keep the ring.

David went into the alcove that led into the tiny bathroom, and as he stooped over the basin, he was suddenly conscious of the peculiar path his life had taken. It was the sort of consciousness that comes over a man unexpectedly, in the midst of a crisis. For hours he has been exploring unfamiliar depths of experience, touching the fringes of tragedy, of disillusionment, of intense pain, and he is so deep in life that he is unaware of himself taking part in it. Then, abruptly, there comes a breathing space, as though he were

watching himself in a mirror, as though he were seeing himself X-rayed, his emotions plain before him. There he was in Maxine's rooms, and tomorrow he would be her husband. How had he come here to the dwelling of this prostitute, and why had he been so wrung, so squeezed of emotions? What was this woman to him? Why had he pleaded with her on his knees? David was standing there beside himself, and he saw himself washing the tear stains from his face. There was a moment of complete comprehension when he realized that he ought not to be there at all, but somewhere else where he would be free to do as he pleased. But the scent of Maxine's soap was in his nostrils, and there were some of her hairpins on the top of the basin. And he walked into himself again, and was complete in his surrender.

David was in the alcove washing his face and Maxine could hear him, and she was irritated with the sounds he made. On the table near her was a box of cigarettes and she lit one and coughed. She did not like to smoke, but there had been times when it was expected of her. After she had lighted the cigarette, she stood quite still in the center of the room and remembered the first man to whom she had given herself. She had a view of herself as she once was, the girl back there in Chicago, the first man. She had loved him. She had believed everything he told her, and every part of him was dear and good to every part of her. You could not think of his doing a dishonorable thing. You could not think of him except as a man in a picture painted in bright colors, beautiful in every proportion of his body, clean in every part of his mind. While David was in the alcove, Maxine stepped out of herself for a moment and was back there in Chicago the first time she had seen the man. She was, in that moment of first seeing him, somehow unreal, somehow divine. Up to the time she had come upon that man her life had been nothing; and since the time he had deserted her, she had been out of tune with the world, a

loud discord, something tainted. Maxine saw herself, just for a moment, a divine being, and the cigarette burned itself out in her mouth. The girl she had been, the woman she was. It was so strange. It was something that was all tangled up inside her, and if she tried to untangle it she would only add to the strangeness, only make the tangle more complex. When David emerged from the bathroom, Maxine was once more within herself, compact, delivered, used.

"We can get Judge Carroll to marry us," she said to David. "I'll have to get a pair of white gloves. My old ones are a disgrace. They've got some lovely gloves at Connell's for three-seventy-five."

Next day at supper time, Moses took off his shoes and sat down in the rocking-chair in the front room. Every evening, he took off his shoes before starting supper, and when he took them off he sighed, "A-ah!" in great relief and stretched out his toes under the heavy socks. Rebecca complained bitterly, saying, it would look fine, wouldn't it, if some of the neighbors should come in and see his shoes like that on the carpet, and why didn't he wipe off his feet before he came into the house? But Moses paid no attention at all; he knew that if Rebecca did not nag him about his shoes, it would be about something else. The old woman had never been the same since Michael had been born. Each day she grew more nervous, and often she threw dishes on the floor. She suffered hallucinations that her children were robbing her and that Daisy's Christian Science was a supernatural spell that had been cast upon the whole family. "Ever since she started with this Christian Science we have had troubles," she grumbled.

Moses replied that he did not come home to listen to foolish chatter, and she'd be better off if she took more pains with the cooking. This criticism started Rebecca off on new complaints. How did Moses expect good food when they

needed a new kitchen range and when the chimney wasn't drawing?

Their voices were whips that they used to lash one another. Ever since Moses had ceased having any physical intercourse with Rebecca, he had come to regard her as a nuisance in the house. He might have been contented if she had cooked and kept house and ruled the hired girl efficiently; but she did not do any one of these things well, and she nagged him from the time he stepped into the house until he fell asleep. And often in the middle of the night he would be awakened by her voice, threatening, complaining, worrying him. Her words were like lice crawling all over him, giving him no peace. She had been so meek and pliable in her youth, but now she was a regular old shrew, and often Moses would curse at her, telling her to go to Hell where she belonged. And he went downtown and played pinochle with Gershon Sheff, the expressman, and Mr. Glassberg, the trunkmaker. He never looked at another woman, even though he was in the very prime of his strength and manhood. The mere thought of any other woman filled him with disgust. He sometimes wondered if the Jewish Law was not very foolish in commanding men to marry. Himself would never have married if the Law had not ordained it. Men were much more pleasant to get on with than women. It was too bad they could not give birth to children.

He liked the feel of men's bodies close to him. When he came home in the evening, he lay down full length in bed and called for Michael to stand on his back and walk all over his body. It was soothing to him and the weight of his son's body relaxed his tired muscles. When Michael grew tired of this and wanted to jump out of the bed, Moses would call him back sharply, and poor Michael had to continue this strange procedure, standing in his bare feet on his father's back and shoulders. For a while it was fun, and Michael laughed when he lost his balance and fell on the

bed beside Moses. But later, when he was older, Michael grew ashamed of the peculiar exercise and hated it. He had never loved his father. He never quite understood him.

So that when Moses had taken off his shoes and was rocking in the chair waiting for supper, the telephone bell rang and Moses stood up to answer it. Michael came into the room at that moment, and the boy, now fourteen years old, saw his father at the telephone. Michael saw the high ridges of his father's back. There was strength and power in the man, a deep well of virility that Michael humbly admired.

"Hello . . . Is this you, David? . . . Where you are, so late? I opened the new barrel of wine tonight . . . You bet, it's a good wine . . . And strong, too, you bet . . . What, David? What did you say? . . . *Vus sugst di?* . . . You was—married? . . . What do you say? . . . I thought maybe . . . I thought maybe you was joking . . . You got married? . . . Who? Who? . . . I never heard . . . The name again . . . I don't know . . . David! I'll . . . I'll kill you for such a thing . . . I am your father . . . I'll . . . I'll . . . I'll throw you out from the house . . . A *shiksa!* You married such a woman . . . Dave . . . Dave . . ."

Michael, for all his youth, had looked into life's somber depths, but he had never before been so moved as now when he saw his father's back that had been so powerful, so strong, contract into weakness, into a premature senility. You are looking at muscle, at supremacy, at the prime, the peak of manhood, and then it all shrinks away and there is the same old back, but it is not the same at all. Up to this moment, Michael had looked on his father as a vivid, relentless force; but the moment was past and there at the telephone stood a pitiful, weak old man. Michael had never seen Moses cry before, not even in the synagogue, that house of many lamentations. But now Moses was leaning weakly against the wall near the telephone, sobbing wretchedly. He held the tele-

phone receiver in his hand as if he did not know what to do with it. David, on the other end of the wire, had stopped talking, and there was nothing left to say. After a minute, Michael could hear a faint click, and he knew that David had cut off.

Moses looked around and saw Michael. The sight of his youngest son seemed to recall to him the dreadful news he had just heard over the telephone. He touched his lips to the transmitter. "You don't mean you married a *shiksa,* a girl . . . such a woman? David . . ." Moses cried out his son's name in Hebrew again and again. But there was no response now but the operator's "Number, please?"

"David!"

Rebecca, in the kitchen, heard the agonized cry and came into the room, and her eyes seemed too anxious to remain in her head. She stood on the threshold, her face made blank by astonishment. She had never seen Moses so cut down, so stricken. *"Vus is?"* she asked. *"Gott, vus vehnst di?"*

Moses saw her there. He would not weep before her. He rubbed his eyes fiercely with a large bandanna handkerchief. He would not demean himself and weep before a woman even though she had been his wife for thirty years.

"David, he got married to a—a *shiksa,"* he said brokenly. He placed the receiver back on the hook, mechanically, and then stumbled into the rocking-chair. He fell into the chair and sat without moving the slightest bit. His persecuted mind was dancing about in anguish, but his body was immovable, dead.

Rebecca stood looking at him. "It's the Christian Science," she said at last with an intolerable mournfulness, and went back into the kitchen. She moved from the stove to the table and her fingers drummed on the tablecloth. "That Daisy with her Christian Science. She has cast a curse upon us. God is angry and He is making us suffer." Then she started walking aimlessly up and down the room and finally she sat

down in a kitchen chair and looked intently at the electric light. "Now we will be shamed before the whole town," she murmured. "A young Jewish boy to marry a woman from the streets. It's the Christian Science." She got up and walked into the front room. "It's that Daisy with her book she's always reading," she said to Moses.

The three sons, Louis, Sol, and Harry, came in from outdoors, and Rebecca told them what had happened.

"David is too dumb, too soft," said Louis. "We're all soft, but he is the worst of all of us. That woman he married. I know all about her. She's a common whore from Down the Line."

"That's a hell of a note for Lina Bachmann," put in Sol. "After it's been in all the papers that they were goin' to be married——"

"She'll keep his ring, I bet," said Harry.

"Another hundred and twenty-five dollars thrown away," sighed Rebecca. "Are we made from money, maybe, that we should throw it away?"

"Everybody will talk," said Harry.

"Let them talk," Moses said at last. He surveyed his wife and children angrily. Their criticism brought back something of his old strength and power. "I'll show them all. I'll bring him and the girl into my house and they can live with me." He glared defiantly at Rebecca and his sons. "I'll show them I ain't ashamed from nobody!" He began beating the table with his fists. "Who are they to talk? I'll show them all that I can still hold up my head!"

"You would take such a woman into my house?" asked Rebecca with a nervous incredulity. She started pacing up and down, cracking her knuckles. "You would shame your wife and your children by taking in such a woman from the streets? But I will not hear from such a thing! No! I say, no! To sleep under the same roof with her, to see her painting herself in the looking-glass! Maybe you are so low, but not

me! I will lock my doors! I will drive her away! I will kill such a woman who has slept with every man in Silver Bow!"

"Sit you down!" Moses thundered at her. "Are you my boss that you should say what I must and must not do? I will have the woman here so people will see Moses Singermann can hold his head high with the best!"

"David ought to take his own house," said Louis, coming to his mother's defense. "We'd never get along with her. I don't see any sense in having them here. The house is crowded enough as it is."

"That's what I say," was Sol's contribution. "Anyway, she probably won't like it here. She thinks that we're rich."

"And she'll break him," said Harry. "She'll take every cent he has and leave him for some other guy. It's in her to do it."

"And I say she comes here," retorted Moses. "I will look after him maybe he don't send me into the bankruptcy courts. The fool. The young fool! But he is not a stranger to me. The young fool. . . . He is my son."

"But no," droned on Rebecca, pacing up and down. "I won't be shamed before all Silver Bow, people should say, 'Look who they take into their house, a dirty woman from the streets.' All my life I have worked hard, and now this strange woman comes to take everything away from me. In Hell, I will see her. Look at me. All of you, look at me. See how my hair is turning white, how my hands are red from washing and scrubbing. And now I must clean after such a diseased woman, maybe she has slept with how do I know so many diseased men."

"Mama is right," said Louis. "It's bad enough she had to work so hard for all of us without being a servant to Mrs. David Singermann."

"Hear, even your own son takes my part," said Rebecca, standing beside Moses' chair, her fingers drumming on the table. "But you, an old stubborn man what don't even know when his own son is sleeping with a *shiksa*——"

"Be still!" cried Moses, rising from his chair and trembling with rage. "You can all go, all of you. But this is my house, and I say David should bring his wife here. She is a Singermann. I will kill you all if you speak any more to me!"

"Don't, papa! Sit down!" sobbed Michael from the end of the table. "Sit down. Oh, why are you fighting?"

"See how you make your own child cry," said Rebecca. And then she began to weep hysterically. "It's that Christian Science," she sobbed. "It's Daisy with her Christian Science what has brought all these troubles on us!"

"Be quiet, you and your Christian Science," Moses taunted her. "Bring me some soup and stop talking like a crazy woman."

"What the hell, let's eat," suggested Sol.

"I don't want to eat," sobbed Michael, and picked up a plate and dropped it on the floor. His thoughts were perverse with wretchedness. "I don't want to eat!" he cried in a loud voice. He was becoming hysterical, and Moses went over to him and shook him and pushed him from the room.

"Go to bed," Moses commanded his youngest son. "You mama's boy, you grandson of Michael, the fiddler. Go to bed."

"He's spoiled," said Harry. "The kid is spoiled."

But Louis put his arm about Michael and talked to him quietly and led him from the room. "You're too old to act this way," said Louis in a gentle voice. "All of this noise, this crying and calling names. . . . All of this, what is it to you? It is nothing . . ." And he went into Michael's room and talked to him quietly until Michael was asleep. Then he came back to finish his cold supper.

ELEVEN: MICHAEL

First, there was a red light shining into Michael's consciousness. He was two years old at the time he saw the red light, and he held out his arms and embraced the red, and he was part of the color and the color was part of him. There was a small, square pane of red glass in the front door. Above it and below were other squares, blue, green, and yellow, and in the center of the door was a rectangle of white glass. Michael lay in his cradle, and the red pane was far off at first, and then enlarged and became great until it filled his world. There were tall people who came to stand about his cradle. There were arms that picked him up and set him down again. But only the color existed. All else was hidden behind an endless red curtain the greatness of which could not be measured.

When Michael was old enough to walk, he reached the red glass and pressed his nose against it and tried to look through it. He saw the world as a never-ending sunset; the front yard, the pickets in the fence, the street beyond; wagons, trolley cars, and people were clothed in a perpetual blood-red. If he looked through the blue glass, the world was a darker color and more mysterious. But it was most exciting to look through the square of yellow glass. The world blazed; men and women, houses, vehicles, were fragments of sunlight whose brilliance was a beautiful pain. Michael could not see through the white glass at all, and so this particular color was not a friend, and Michael hated its glaze. But the red world and the blue, yellow, and green worlds were kindly and familiar. Michael could pass his tongue over their surfaces and taste them, and they were

cold, but it was tasting beautiful worlds. How fine it is to have a front door fitted with colored squares of glass! I will take the colors in my mouth and swallow them and I will be all beautiful inside. If I take my red glass to bed with me and if I hold it close enough, I will dream red things, people passing up and down with red legs and arms and faces. Some houses have no colored squares of glass in their front doors, and the children who live inside can never see the world changing from red to blue, from yellow to green. I wouldn't live in that kind of a house.

There are no intervals. There are panes of glass and the ceiling so high, and suspended from the ceiling is a chandelier with bits of crystal glass that tinkle. Sometimes the crystals sing blue songs, and sometimes green. Sometimes a great crystal orchestra strikes up its music and fills the room with a gorgeous conflict of resplendent colors.

An orange has a crisp, tart taste on the outside, and the smell is sharp enough to keep you awake. The taste is sometimes bitter and makes you swallow a lot of juice. Best of all, I like potatoes mashed with lots of butter on them. They fill you up and make you feel tight and stuffy, and they are not so good when you get them down as when you put them in your mouth.

"How did it happen your hair is so full of dandruff?" asks your mother. "Dandruff grows into lice and lice grow into snakes." Your head is buried deep in her lap and she is using a comb with close, sharp teeth, combing out the dandruff. The comb bites into your head and hurts and you scream and want to be free, but you are a prisoner of the lap and cannot escape.

Lonely footsteps in the middle of the night. Picking the wings off a fly. Falling asleep in a chair and waking up the next morning in bed. How did you get there? The sweet smell of the earth after the rain. The scarlet threads that ring a coffee cup. A man painting the red boards of a house

green. Your bed is wet and that makes the skin along your legs itch. The wet came during the night. "What, has he wet the bed again? The mattress is all ruined. You bad boy!" Breakfast is hot. The coffee burns your tongue, the oatmeal is like hot ashes in your mouth. Milk does not make it go down so rich and velvety as cream. Watermelon is full of black seeds, and sometimes yellow. "Don't swallow them, you'll get appendicitis." What's that? They cut into you and take out the seeds. Sometimes they grow inside you and you may have trees growing in your stomach. Watermelon trees and grape trees and orange trees.

Or Rover has puppies in the barn and they are all blind. You pick up a puppy and it sniffs and wriggles in your hand. Rover's eyes will not let you go when you pick up one of her puppies. When the puppies get older they play all over themselves and when they sleep they lie in and on and under each other. Their little bodies tremble in their sleep.

The cat walks past without noticing you. You run after her and she runs away, behind the stove, under the table. You put your hand on her soft fur and then the softness is all changed in a moment and you look at your hand and there are three small lines of blood on it. The cat looks as if she is saying, "Let that be a lesson." But sometimes she jumps into your lap and goes puz-zzz, puz-zzz a long time, and you wonder how does that sound come out of a cat?

Harry and Sol go to school. They get up early in the morning and you hear them quarreling in the kitchen, but you don't care what they are saying. School is a long ways off. Some day you will go to school, and Harry says that his principal is Miss Birdseye and that she has a strap in her office that she uses on kids who are tardy. What is tardy? The principal keeps her strap locked up in her desk. Miss Birdseye has a long face shaped like an eggplant and little whiskers grow out of the corners of her mouth. You go to Harry and ask him, What is tardy? Oh, blow your nose and

pull up your stockings, says Harry. Your stockings are always falling down and you are always losing your garters. You sloppy little pup. Harry is bitter and sharp, and when he comes close to you the breath that comes out of his mouth smells of teeth and things to eat. Harry has to practice on the violin, and Michael hears the selections from *The Prince of Pilsen* and *The Shogun*. Harry says that Gustave Luders wrote the music. Music is small black dots standing up on one leg. Sometimes the music stands on its head, and sometimes it has no leg at all, just a head. And when it's just a head, it means, Harry says, that you hold it, one, two, three four.

Michael began to sing at a very early age. He did not know it, but he used to sing in his cradle. He would catch hold of his mother's tunes and hang on to them. When he was three years old, David played *Turkey in the Straw* on the cornet, and Michael danced. De-de-de, de, de, deetle-dootle deetle-dee, up and down the bare floor keeping perfect time to the music. Rebecca used her apron to fan the hot merriment of her face, and Rachel clapped her hands keeping time, time, time. Deetle do-do, dootle deetle do-de-de. *"Er tunct, der klener,"* laughed Rebecca. *"Sehst ihm vie er tunct?"* And Rachel took Michael's hand and they danced around in a circle until Rachel was quite out of breath and subsided against the wall, gasping and giggling. But Michael tugged at her hands and begged, "Come, Rachel. Some more. Some more." But David was red in the face and his cheeks were tired of blowing the horn, and he said, "You got to have a constitution to play the cornet. Look at the players in Sousa's band. Wonderful constitutions."

But David blew his cornet less and less, and Harry began to take lessons on the violin. Harry, at this time, was thin-chested, and he had high cheek bones and large, liquid brown eyes that bulged out a little. Harry could open his

mouth wide and show you his tonsils. If they're red, it's tonsillitis, but if they're white it's diphtheria. When Sol had diphtheria that time, Michael went to live in the store, sleeping on the counter of blankets. While he was living in the store, Michael ate all his meals in the Greek restaurant next door, and for lunch he had hamburger with onions. He sat perched on a high stool and said, "Hamburger, please." And the Greek waiter, who had an oily, dark face and who wore red carpet slippers with green flowers on them, asked, "With onions?"

"Sure."

When Michael went home again, Sol was over his diphtheria, and he said there was one disease he didn't want to see again. Sol said that when he had diphtheria, there was a green sign on the door that said,

DIPHTHERIA!
This House Quarantined
By Order Silver Bow
Department of
Health

But now they had taken the green sign off and burned it, and there was no danger. "You can sleep with me now," said Sol, "and you won't catch anything." Sol said that there was a red sign for scarlet fever, a yellow one for smallpox, and a white one for measles. Michael said that he wouldn't like to have any of those signs. He would like to have a blue sign, but Sol said he didn't know what a blue sign meant. Michael was a little bit sorry when Sol got over his diphtheria, because he had liked sleeping on the blankets in the store and eating hamburger in the Greek restaurant. Sometimes, Rebecca made hamburger but it didn't have onions on it. So it really couldn't be hamburger, could it? Sitting on a high stool, like that, as if you were grown up, too, and

getting a check with a hole punched in it. Michael liked to eat in restaurants. He liked to walk out of a restaurant chewing a toothpick. And one day he asked David to lend him his celluloid toothpick that David always kept in his vest pocket. But David said that wouldn't be sanitary.

Harry had a fiddle and a fiddle case that looked like a small black coffin. Inside, the violin lay all dead stretched out on pink silk, and it wouldn't come to life until Harry put it under his chin. Harry was very careful of his fiddle case and wouldn't let Michael touch it. "Take your dirty hands off my case!" he would cry in his voice all filled with bitterness, like cough medicine. Harry was always taking medicines for his red tonsils. Sometimes he was sick and stayed home from school and Rebecca tied a stocking around his throat. When Harry had red tonsils, he smelled of salve and sat in a chair and wouldn't let anyone come near him. When he was ready to return to school, he would write a note to the teacher and sign his mother's name at the bottom. "Please excuse Harry's absence from school, Thursday, as he had a very bad sore throat, and oblige, Rebecca Singermann." Michael didn't like Harry except when he played the violin. The music stand was a small nickel-plated square until Harry unfolded it and made it stand up on its legs. Then it was taller than Michael. Michael marveled at the stand and wanted to take it in his room and make it small then make it stand up again. But Harry said, "If I catch you with my stand I'll break your neck."

Harry had a cake of resin, and he slid it up and down the tight strings of his bow, but he wouldn't let Michael touch the resin. Before the fiddle would play, it had to have resin. Then Harry would put a handkerchief under his chin so that the edge of the fiddle wouldn't irritate him. It was all wonderful to watch. Michael would sit in one corner and look at Harry passing the resin over the bow, turning the black keys on the fiddle, putting the handkerchief under

his chin. Harry said that when you played the piano all you had to do was sit down; but when you played the violin there was a whole rigmarole to go through. Michael liked the sweet, medicine smell of the resin. It looked like it would be good to chew. Whenever Harry slid the resin over the bow, Michael's mouth watered as if he wanted to eat the resin.

Harry played *Faust* and *Carmen* on the fiddle because the teacher said it was something to be able to play classical music and not just trash. But Harry despised operatic music and made bitter, scraping sounds and held his mouth open all the time he played. But when he played the selection from *Forty-Five Minutes From Broadway,* his mouth closed and his high cheek bones grew rosy with pleasure. Michael clapped his hands and danced around the room and Rebecca in the kitchen hummed songs that had nothing to do with what Harry was playing. When Harry came to the part where Mary had a love scene with Kid Burns in New Rochelle, Michael started in to sing, first in a low, subdued voice, for Harry might make him stop out of jealousy. But if Harry didn't object, Michael raised his voice to a clear, sweet soprano,

> For it was Ma-ry, Ma-ry,
> Sweet as any name can be;
> But in So-ci-e-ty, Pro-pri-e-ty
> Will say, Ma-rie!

What was pro-pri-e-ty, Michael wondered? He felt sorry for poor Mary who had to be called Ma-rie because of pro-pri-e-ty. He grew sad as he sang this song, but his voice grew sweeter and sweeter, until,

> And there is something there
> That sounds so square!
> It's a gra-and old name!

So Mary vanquished pro-pri-e-ty in the end, and Michael was very happy that she did, too. Pro-pri-e-ty was like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, that book that Harry had read one night. It was all horrible and green like the middle of the night when that kind of fever comes on you and it seems as though someone is trying to get in through the window. What if it should be Mr. Hyde? Mr. Hyde all doubled up like a hunchback with a green face, red eyes, and a slimy mouth. Mr. Hyde carrying a club with a knotty end. Harry said that he had been to the theater to see Richard Mansfield play both parts; but Michael couldn't see how that could happen, an actor being Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde at the same time. Harry said there was real blood in the play when Mr. Hyde hit a poor girl over the head with his club and cracked open her skull. Michael was sorry that his brother had gone to see Richard Mansfield, because Harry kept talking about it and Michael kept waking up in the middle of the night. Because if Michael's skull should be cracked open, that would be real, not a play.

As Michael grew older, his voice became stronger. Before, it had been something inside him that came out thin and squeaky; but now it was growing rich and ripe, and he sang every night until Moses came home, and then he was shy and wouldn't sing, no matter how much his father coaxed him. He was afraid of his father. His father made his voice something that he heard himself. When Moses was in the room it was as though he stood off by himself looking at Michael's voice, feeling it between his fingers the way he felt cotton and wool in the store. Michael sang for Rachel and Rebecca and forgot that they were listening. They were in love with his voice and entranced by it, and Michael could see them and feel them in the room, but they couldn't touch his voice. His songs conquered them; but his voice hid itself away in sharp corners of his throat and chest when Moses

came into the room. It was like a whipped dog, and it would make whining noises. It wouldn't sing out rich and free and strong.

But sometimes Michael would sing when he thought his father was out of the house. His music was as clear and young as water tumbling over rounded white stones in the winding bed of a brook. And Moses would not be out of the house at all. He would be standing by the front door, listening,

> Please come and play in my yard,
> I'm all alone you see,
> Once I was rich like you are,
> And in so-ci-e-ty . . .

Moses heard him sing that song, and he said, "The B'nai B'rith is giving an entertainment in the Moose Hall for charity, and Harry is down on the program to play the violin, so Michael must sing, *"Please Come and Play in my Yard."* Michael cried bitterly and said he wouldn't sing. He was trembling with fear at the thought of singing before a crowd of people. Somebody might laugh at him and his voice would run away and he wouldn't be able to catch it. Or else his voice would hide somewhere inside him and refuse to show itself. Harry said that he didn't think Michael would be able to sing before all those people, and it would be best for Michael to stay home or he'd make fools of all of them. Rebecca said, no, he must sing, he must not always be a *Mama-beholt mich*—Mama, hide me. Rebecca wanted to be there when her youngest son sang, so she could catch his liquid, clear voice in her hands and hold it above her head so that everyone could see.

The big night arrived, and Michael was dressed up in a white waist, blue knickerbockers, and new brown shoes that hurt his feet. Rachel squirted him with perfume, and David gave him a packet of Sen Sen to make his breath pretty.

When they entered Moose Hall, Michael heard the many voices of a vast audience, and he wanted to run away. A big man with an elaborate white and gold badge pinned on his coat lapel said to Moses, "So this is the boy with the voice," and Michael blushed and wanted to kill the man for speaking in such a loud tone so that everybody could hear.

Michael and Harry sat far up front in collapsible seats, awaiting their turn on the program. There were songs by a fat lady who sang with an easy contempt. It was as if she were all alone singing by herself. And then someone played the piano, and Michael hoped that the man who introduced the performers would forget about him. But this man shouted in a terribly loud voice, "Next on the program, ladies and gentlemen, is Harry Singermann, son of the well-known merchant. Harry will play the violin and his brother, Michael, will sing. Give them a little encouragement, folks. Louder. Louder. Say, I can't hear you, Becky Simon. Stop holding hands with that young feller and give the Singermann brothers a boost." Harry started for the platform and he was halfway there before he realized that Michael remained sitting in his chair, pale and wretched. Harry looked embittered. He beckoned to Michael, and Michael tried to make himself as small as possible. Moses poked him from behind and he had to get up, and the strings of his waist had come undone and fell over his trousers. Rebecca sprang to his assistance and drew the strings tight and neat and pushed Michael towards the platform. "Come on, son, you're holdin' up the show," shouted the announcer in his big, beefy voice. His voice was a bull with horns that ripped Michael into many pieces. He followed Harry up the steps on to the platform, and he tried to hide behind the immense black piano, but Harry pushed him out into the center of the platform. Michael felt that there was still hope, for Harry's violin often snapped a string so that the performer could not play.

But this time the strings held fast. Harry began playing and whispered, "Is this too high?"

Michael opened his mouth. The music came out from between his lips and looked at the crowd with a frightened squeak, then jumped back into his mouth again. "Louder, louder," whispered Harry. Michael dove back after his voice and pulled hard, and it came out strident and thin. But after a few minutes it grew more daring, until at the end of the song,

Please come and play in my yard

it was clear and sweet and poured a cool, young stream out of his small body. There was generous applause and Michael smiled weakly at Harry, and Harry said, "Blow your nose." But Michael had forgotten his handkerchief, so Harry gave him his and it smelled of the little bottle of pink perfume in Rachel's room. Everybody laughed, but the laughter sounded kind now and had a warm, comforting, maternal substance in it. And next time, Michael sang as he did at home when only his mother was an audience.

If I had a thousand hearts to give,
I'd give them all to you.
If I had a thousand lives to live,
I'd live them all for you.

And after this song was finished, Michael wanted to sing, *School Days,* but Harry pulled him off the platform. Later in the evening, Michael stood behind the great bowl of red punch in the anteroom and sang *School Days,*

And you wrote on my slate
I love you, Joe,
When we were a couple of kids.

And one man who was drinking punch began to cry and gave Michael a quarter.

The Webster Public School was on the South Side, a great tyrant of a red brick building surrounded on all sides by the dreary wastes of the Flats. When Michael was six years old, he was taken to this school by Sol and Harry, and there was the same frightened feeling inside him that there had been on the evening when he sang, *Please Come and Play in my Yard*. He had looked forward to school, but now as he entered the building for the first time, he was overcome by a sudden nausea, and he tugged at Harry's hand and wanted to run away. Seated at his desk, he began to weep and scream, and the teacher came up to him and said, "See here, young man, we can't have this."

The schoolroom smelled of small children and damp varnish and chalk. He wept all morning and all afternoon and vowed that he would never go back to that prison again. But next morning he was forced to return, to sit at his desk and build houses with colored sticks. But the sticks would not stay the way he wanted them to and he got his fingers smudged and black with ink. He was glad to get home and he wondered why he had ever thought that going to school would be nice. It was better to stay at home and play motorman with hairbrushes and combs for street cars.

Michael shrank from the rough games of the boys. They played leapfrog and football and pushed one another about. At recess time, they would fly out of the building and scream they were Indians and some were Buffalo Bill, and some brought slingshots they had made themselves. Michael would run with the girls, but they would stick out their tongues at him and make faces. But he liked their games better. He liked to watch them playing hopscotch, each little girl hopping about on one leg like a bruised canary. There was such a twittering among the girls, and when they jumped, their pigtails flew up and down and beat against their backs. They smelled fresher than the boys. Sometimes the boys would gather in a crowd and fling themselves into

the girlish games, annihilating the fine, delicate rhapsodies of play. The girls would scream and cry, "I'll tell teacher on you. I'll just tell teacher, Mr. Smarty, and you'll have to stay after school. Oh, wait, just wait. You'll get a whipping, Frankie Ellis." The boys would look cowed, but to show their superiority they would dash about from one girl to another, yanking at pigtails and pulling at apron strings. But most of the time the boys were too busy with their own undisciplined games to bother with the girls.

Michael's sensitiveness set him apart, and the other boys would only notice him in spurts. One day they whispered amongst themselves and cast curious glances at him where he stood, a lonely figure, in the recess yard. Then one of them, Johnny Crowley, from up in Dublin Gulch, came over to Michael and said, "I'll knock the stuffin's out of you." Michael tried to smile, but failed, and walked away. Then Johnny Crowley picked up a stick and placed it on his shoulder. "If you ain't afraid to fight me, knock this off my shoulder," said Johnny Crowley. Michael wanted the bell to end recess. He wanted to be back at his desk safe from Johnny Crowley and these Indians who were menacing him. But recess had only just begun and Michael knew that he was trapped. He approached Johnny Crowley and knocked the stick off his shoulder. Johnny then punched Michael in the face, as hard as he could, and where Johnny had hit him there was a red, burning hole. Michael was enraged and sprang at Johnny and they both fell over in the sand and wrestled, each one trying to get on top. The other boys surrounded the fighters and yelled fiercely, and they all wanted Johnny Crowley to win. Michael wept bitterly as he fought. He closed his eyes and struck out blindly at his foe. Johnny Crowley was the school and the teachers and the principal and all the pupils. Every time that Michael kicked Johnny Crowley he kicked at one of the walls of the Webster School. But Johnny was bigger and stronger than

Michael, and knocked the breath out of him and hit his nose so hard that it began to bleed. The school bell started ringing and Johnny sprang up and the other boys followed him. But Michael sat alone in the emptying yard, the blood from his nose flowing into his mouth and staining his clothes.

When the teacher came up to him he kicked at her and told her to go away. When she asked him who had given him the bloody nose he screamed, "Go away! I hate you!" The teacher grabbed at his hand and pulled him into the school, into the lavatory, and filled a washbasin with warm water. She dampened her handkerchief and held it to his nose. "Hold your head back," she said. "I won't hurt you, you naughty boy. Be a little gentleman and hold your head back." After a few minutes the flow of blood had been staunched, and the teacher asked, "Who made your nose bleed?" And Michael answered, "Won't tell you. Won't tell you." So the teacher made him stay after school and write *I am a bad boy* one hundred times.

Not every boy in Michael's class was like Johnny Crowley of Dublin Gulch. There was one boy with dark, wavy hair who came in every morning with his face shining clean and his stockings always neat. It was a pleasure to look at him and it was a pleasure to hear him talk. He always knew the answers to things, and he could multiply 13 x. He also could do division, and he said that was nothing. When he had been in Boston last year he had studied with a tutor who taught him French, and he could speak it, too. He had called his tutor *monsieur,* and his tutor had called him the *petit jeune homme.* This boy's name was Donald Forbes, and Michael liked Donald and he liked Forbes. Donald was a name as shining smooth and white as polished quartz, and Forbes meant big rooms in a big house and plenty of toys for Christmas. Johnny Crowley was a name with splinters in it or a brown marble that cost a penny. Donald was a

flinty the color of cream that cost five cents. Johnny Crowley wore straight pants and his stockings had holes in them down to his shoes. Sometimes you could see his underwear falling down below his straight pants. Donald Forbes had on a suit of the kind Buster Brown wore in the funnies, but he didn't have long hair like Buster had. Michael looked and looked at Donald Forbes and he thought that Donald Forbes was swell, better than Happy Hooligan in the Sunday paper in bed with the smell of oatmeal coming from the kitchen. Donald Forbes was prettier than the *Merry Widow Waltz* that Harry had just learned to play on the violin. When he was supposed to be studying his reading lesson, Michael would sneak looks at Donald Forbes. *Mo-ther says that I may go out in-to the coun-try next sum-mer. The coun-try is a love-ly place. There are trees and flowers in the coun-try. There are cows in the coun-try and they give milk. How would you like to milk a cow? I think it is good fun.* Michael looked at Donald Forbes and thought he'd much rather be with Donald than be milking a cow in the country. Or if he were in the country, it would be wonderful to have Donald Forbes there, too. Both of them in a green meadow talking about Boston and *un petit jeune homme*. He would ask Donald, what is a tutor? And what does *petit jeune homme* mean? And how do you like me, Donald? I like you very much. I think I like you better than my father and brothers and everything.

Michael felt the first pangs of love, the fevers, the restlessness, the sweet loneliness of love. The way Donald walked was shining and neat, and the way Donald talked, the words came out of his mouth like soldiers at attention. Michael dreamed about Donald. He went to bed and wished that Donald were in bed with him and they could talk. He took Donald apart and put Donald together again. He wanted to feel Donald, and he wondered if Donald liked licorice. Sometimes he thought that it would

be wonderful to run away with Donald to another city, and they would have a hotel to live in, and everybody who came up to him would see that he was all right because he was with Donald.

But all that winter and all that spring, Donald Forbes never once looked at Michael. May came and the boys sang at recess,

> Four more weeks and I'll be free
> From this school of misery,
> No more scoldin's when I'm late,
> No more writin' in a darned old slate . . .

and the song filled Michael with a languorous sadness. He had hated school until one day when Donald had filled his vision, and now the thought of parting from the one he loved filled him with a recurring, regretful sorrow. In early June, the sun was so strong that the blinds were drawn down the windows, and flies buzzed monotonously during lessons. On the last day of school even Johnny Crowley came with his face washed and his hair all soapy, but there was still a hole in his stocking. The teacher distributed the report cards, and everybody looked to see if he had passed. The teacher said, "And now, children, good-by until September, and I hope you have very pleasant vacations." Teacher looked nice today and Michael wondered why he had hated her so. She had on a soft dress with big red flowers in it that she had never worn before, and her face didn't have an ink mark on it. She smelled much nicer too, and she didn't scold anybody, not even when they whispered. And all the boys and girls marched past her desk, single file, on their way out, "Good-by, Miss Doughty. Good-by, Miss Doughty. Miss Doughty, good-by." The voices of the girls were clear and bright and musical, and the voices of the boys were rough and somewhat abashed. But they all forgot about Miss Doughty when they reached the front doors; and they

ran like free, released puppies out into the yard, screaming and laughing with unrestrained joy. They inhaled their freedom, tossed it about amongst themselves, kicked it joyously and then picked it up and cuddled it.

Michael walked alone across the Flats, filled with sunshine now, and he came to where the sidewalks began on South Montana Street, and felt sorry that school was over. It was vacation time and the sun was warmer, but there was a wistful breeze that blew the feeble grass by the side of the walk. Michael walked along toward home with his report card in his hand. He had passed. Next year he would be in the Second Grade and have a different teacher, but Donald Forbes might not be there.

"Hello, Michael!"

Michael looked back and saw Donald walking behind him. Donald who made the sidewalk shine under his footprints. "Wait for me, Michael." As though Michael would not wait for him! And yet Michael, suddenly possessed of his desire, was too much filled with its golden quality, and he wanted to escape from its insupportable happiness. He was so shy now that Donald Forbes was walking beside him.

"Where do you live, Michael?"

"On West Granite Street."

"I live on North Excelsior."

That was a big house where Donald lived, and there were a hundred windows in it, maybe, and some were colored windows and they are best of all. Sitting in a room where the sun shines in through colored glass, how fine that is! You catch the blue light and the green and the rose in your eyes and make believe they are true colors and not painted that way by the glass.

"I passed," whispered Michael, shyly. "Did you pass—Donald?"

"Oh, I knew I'd pass," said Donald. "Next year I'm going to jump a grade and be in the Third."

"Oh," said Michael. He felt himself sinking down under the street. He was alone now, surrounded by Johnny Crowleys. All the colored glass was just plain again, and there were no blue and green and rose sunbeams.

"I'll be in the Third Grade," said Donald, "but I won't be here. I'll be in Seattle."

"What's that?"

"It's a city in Washington. I'm going to live in Seattle."

"And ain't you never coming back, Donald?"

"No. My mother's going to take me to Seattle and I'm never coming back. Do you want a piece of licorice?"

"Yes."

"There's the sea in Seattle. There's boats. Big boats that have sails. Were you ever on a boat?"

"No."

"I have a little boat home, but there's no place to make it sail. But there's a place in Seattle."

"I wish I had a boat."

"This is the way I go. Do you go up this street?"

"I'll go as far as your house."

Michael wanted to tell Donald something as they walked the rest of the way to the big house on North Excelsior Street. He wanted to say that maybe when he was grown up he would come to Seattle and he and Donald would have a boat together. But there was a burning red ball in his throat, and the ball would break into tears if he said what he wanted to.

"This is my house," said Donald. A woman, very cool and white-looking, came out on the porch, and Donald cried, "Mother!" and forgot about Michael. So Michael watched Donald run up on the porch of the big house and watched the cool, beautiful woman kiss Donald. Then they both went into the house and slammed the door after them.

"Good-bye, Donald," said Michael.

So Michael turned away, weeping, and he wept all the

way home. He went into the house and showed Rebecca his report card and she couldn't read it anyway. He could read and his mother couldn't, and she was older. So Michael went out on the back porch and played with Rover, and he forgot about Donald.

Sometimes, when he lay in bed in the morning, he would think of Donald away there in Seattle sailing his boat. He remembered how Donald had walked home with him and given him a piece of licorice and how Donald had kissed his mother. Then, for a long time, he did not think about Donald at all. It was a day many years later when he was full grown that Donald came back into his mind. But it was a different sadness now. One falls in love so many times, and each time the first one is harder to remember and the face is just a shape with nothing on it. The first one is like the breeze that blew the grass by the side of the walk.

When Michael was twelve, he worked in the store after school hours. He ran errands and put shoes back into cartons and watched the show. Saturday nights the store was open until ten o'clock, and it was always very busy. Moses placed a large, empty wooden box on the sidewalk and told Michael to keep his eyes open for thieves. There were shoes out there and lunch buckets and slicker coats and a pile of overalls. Michael sat on the box and watched the fascinating people that walked up and down the streets of Silver Bow. Miners were drunk, and there were ladies who said, "An' so I said to that guy, what do you take me for, you poor sap," and they were loud and brassy. Michael was supposed to be watching the show in front of the store; but for minutes at a time his mind would not be there. A Chinaman would float past and Michael would float away with the Chinaman. China was the world around, and Chinamen smoked opium in long pipes. They gave you Chinese candy that looked like jade and had a tart taste. There were lean boys with wide

mouths and snub noses who had come to Silver Bow from Ireland. They worked in the mines, and they were fresh and spoke like this, " 'Tis the divil av of loife, ter sure. What d'ya say to that, lad? Will ye be havin' a drink now?" Their words were green and dewy and they were brash with r's. There were great hulking men who spoke a mumble-jumble of words, dark and tangled in their voices. They were the Bohunks and they always tried to jew you down, no matter what you asked them. Saturday night was a strange time when Michael watched the outside show, maybe somebody should walk off with a pair of shoes. But Michael's mind was far away. He was far from merchandise and possible thefts, riding in street cars, delving into crowds of words that pushed about him, Irish, Bohunk, Chinese, Finn, and American words. At ten o'clock when he helped carry in the show, there was sure to be some article missing. Moses would become very angry with Michael. "A fine watchman. Look on him, the watchman. They could carry away the whole store and he would see nothing. *Hast oigen? Bist blint?"*

There was the main floor where goods were piled high on glass-topped show cases, counters, and wooden tables. The store was not one of your smart places with mirrors glowing and scrubbed linoleum on the floor, and shining, nickel-plated fixtures. The floor was uneven and bare, and the stock bulged and spilled over into narrow aisles. In the front were the collar shelves, and the way a customer picked out the style he wanted was to look in a small glass case where there were samples of each style carried in stock. But the collars had been handled so many times by the Singermann brothers that they were dirty, and so the collar sale was never very brisk. Michael was ashamed to show the collars, they were so soiled. Selling socks was easy, because customers were not so particular. Socks were easy to wrap, too. The neckties hung from horizontal steel rods, and when

a customer said that he wanted to buy a necktie, all you had to answer was, "Take your choice, mister. The ties are marked—fifty and seventy-five cents." You tried to sell for as much as you could get, because you knew that the shoppers who came to the store would always offer you less than you asked. Michael was a poor salesman; he hadn't the trading instinct and he would never develop it. Louis, too, was poor at selling. His mind was sidetracked on window displays, show cards, and textures. But Moses, Joseph, and David were excellent salesmen. Moses was persistent and threatened his customers into buying. Joseph was energetic, a whirlwind, and before a customer was quite aware of what had happened, Joseph was wrapping up a purchase. But David was the best salesman of all, for he had the gift of gab, smoothness, earnestness, and good humor.

Moses watched his sons keenly. He did not like to lose a customer, for he knew from experience that when a shopper left the store without making a purchase, some other merchant in the street would make the sale. When Michael felt that he was losing a customer, he would grow afraid. There were blessed instances when he sold merchandise with an ease that astonished him; but most of the time he was lackadaisical about it and his father would approach him like an angry bull. "You ain't got no sense for business. Is this a way to talk to a customer? Why you let him walk out, huh?"

Often Moses grew so angry that he struck Michael, and the boy would break into tears and run down into the basement where it was dark and quiet. The basement was packed with shoes, suits, blankets, comforters, boxes of shirts, underwear, slabs of leather—everything that a man wore and used. On quiet days, Michael would be sent down there to pile overalls or mark shoe boxes; and he would smuggle down a book he had obtained at the Public Library and read by the dim illumination of the electric light. He would lie on his

stomach atop the blankets with the book in front of him, and there would be the grainy, masculine smell of leather and wool fabrics in his nostrils. Overhead he could hear the muffled footsteps of his brothers waiting on trade, and his absorption in the book before him was all the more exquisite and secure because of his detachment from those tireless footsteps.

Michael had never cared for children's books, and when he had been small the ladies in the library had refused to give him the books that were kept in the shelves labeled *Adult*. But at fourteen, Michael had shot up thin and tall and he looked older than he was. He had begun by reading Edward Stratmeyer's adventure stories, but he could interest himself in them only mildly. Indians and the North Pole and ruffians on ships never absorbed his attention. He was too dreamy and sensitive to care much for adventure. He liked Ralph Henry Barbour's college stories about Tom, Dick, and Harriet, not because of the adventures in them, but rather because of the names of colleges, Yale, Harvard, Columbia. He thought that he would prefer going to Yale when he grew up, but he never could explain why in so many words. He did not know that he liked blue more than any other color. He thought that it would be pleasant to go to Yale and wear a heavy white sweater with a great blue Y sewed on his breast. In the window of one of the furniture stores on West Park Street, there was a picture of such a youth wearing a sweater and peg-top trousers with red socks. He was walking along with his chest stuck out in front of him, and behind waddled a ferocious looking bulldog. The picture was inscribed, *Dear Old Days at Yale*. Michael admired the young man in the picture enormously, and he thought that nothing could be better than walking along the campus at Yale wearing a sweater and being followed by a bulldog.

But once Michael had been admitted to the adult shelves

at the Public Library, he never returned to juvenile fiction. He started with Dickens, but he understood only parts of what he read. He felt sorry for Oliver Twist, but he was deeply humiliated to think that Fagin was a Jew. The name sounded Irish. He attempted George Eliot, but only the chapter about the gypsies in *The Mill on the Floss* interested him. The classics were too long, and the print was small; and when they had illustrations, they were of people who lived long ago. Sir Walter Scott was adventure and therefore dull. It was not until he discovered Robert W. Chambers that reading became an obsession with him. He found *The Fighting Chance* and *The Younger Set* and he read until late at night, completely absorbed. These were truly wonderful stories to Michael with their heroines who nibbled sweets drenched in cologne and bay rum. Robert W. Chambers wrote smoothly about aristocratic men and women, and these people were so far away from Michael's experience, so sweetly odd. The men with their languorous, easy ways, their supple, athletic bodies, their high-toned manners! It would have been pleasant to have such a man for a brother or a father. These men never worked hard, but they always had time to make love and spend week-ends in the country. Michael was particularly fond of the love scenes. The books would begin with the hero and heroine meeting quite casually at a reception or in a Madison Avenue antique shop. The man was unhappy because he had just lost all his money, but he was still a gentleman, and he still wore fine clothes. The girl was beautiful, with clear hazel eyes, a straight, patrician nose, and a dimpled chin. She was so girlish, yet she had a weakness. She couldn't keep away from chocolates filled with rum. Or sometimes it was the man who couldn't keep away from chocolates and the girl who had just lost all her money. They talked along for pages, and Michael loved the effortlessness of their talk. "Darling, I love you, you, you. . . . What is it, Dick, my dear, my

darling? . . . I've sinned. . . . But I want you to know that I'm a gentleman. . . . Yes, said Richard coloring to the roots of his hair, I am a gentleman, a true son of my father. . . . Valerie, my sweet, my own. . . ." The conversation of the Chambers characters lay in Michael's mind, delicate, fine lines of writing that made him forget Silver Bow and the store. They were sensual books. Men were always crushing women in their arms, and women were yielding, passionately. Michael liked scenes like that. In adventure stories, men had so very little time to crush women in their arms. They were ever fighting with brutes and going off on Crusades and silly things like that. And women might only yield for a sentence, with a singularly discreet passion.

Michael ate these Chambers novels. He took the words in his mouth, under his tongue, and they melted there and gave him a sweet sensation in his head. He loathed all the times he was doing other things, selling goods, piling shoe boxes, studying in school, sleeping. He wanted to be reading always, stories about young and beautiful people of affluence, rich youths in college, boys kissing girls in the country. He read all the books of this sort he could find, but sometimes he would select a wrong one, and he would be restless until he could return to the library and search for the young and beautiful people who were passionate. One day Michael took home a story about the green fields of England, and he wanted to be in England. He wanted to go about with Oxford undergraduates and dress in tweeds and smell the heather. What did heather smell like? He went from one book to another, Chambers, Hutchinson, Gene Stratton-Porter (her books had pretty blue flowers decorating the margins, but they were not passionate), Harold Bell Wright, Rupert Hughes. He brought home Compton Mackenzie's *Sinister Street,* and then all the others were not so good as he thought they had been. Even Chambers was forgotten. There was beauty in Mackenzie, a drowsy, unadventurous

charm. Michael felt that the most beautiful book he had ever read was *Plashers Mead*. Some day he would go to England, to Oxfordshire, and find the house in Plashers Mead where Guy had lived. And he would cut his name into a window with a glazier's pencil, and under it he would write, *The fresh green lap of fair King Richard's land*. But would Guy still be there in the silver mists of Oxfordshire and would Pauline go to meet him in the dawn? Pauline, the fairy's child . . . Pauline and Guy dreaming through the golden and green days of Oxfordshire.

At thirteen, Michael was tall and his knickerbockers gave him a gangling look. He was so poor in arithmetic that he had to spend a year and a half in the Eighth Grade, and he was fourteen before he got into High School. He was really a dunce at figures. He could multiply and divide simple problems, but he could not work out in his mind why, if seventeen men were eighty-five years old when each was five, how old was each man when the seventeen were two hundred and thirty-eight? Things like that annoyed Michael, and he wondered what difference it made, anyway? But he could not pass the simplest arithmetic examination, and he did not even try to study. He liked to wander about by himself, through the tawny streets of Silver Bow at sunset, down to the Flats where stood the smelters and breweries. One evening he went down to Galena Street where the prostitutes ogled the passers-by, but when a girl called to him, he blushed furiously and ran off. He was conscious of his long, thin legs and his knickerbockers that were too short for him. Could a boy still in knickerbockers stay with one of those women down on Galena Street? Michael thought about it and had wet dreams, and in the morning he was ashamed.

So he told Moses that he would like to have long pants, but Moses would not listen. Rebecca said, "Don't be in such

a hurry. You will be old a long time." But Michael insisted that boys shorter than he were wearing long pants, and people laughed at him when he walked along, his legs like stilts. He went to his brothers, but they seemed sorry that Michael should want long pants. They said that when you put on long pants you were never the same again. No, you were old, they said, sadly. You started in to shave pretty soon, and once you started, you were done for. Stay in short pants as long as you can, kid. Take my advice.

He was to enter High School in September; and now it was June and he felt ugly and awkward in his short knickerbockers. So he began looking around in the cupboards for the long pants his older brothers had discarded. Most of the pairs were badly worn, but there was one pair that looked almost as good as new. Michael tried them on and they fitted perfectly, neither too short nor too long, snug at the waist and hips. He went into the room where there was a long mirror and looked at himself from every angle and was excited and trembling. He looked like a sure-enough man. His face was suddenly different, cleaner, stronger, and he noticed how fine his eyes were. He looked at himself from every angle and was satisfied that he was a man.

He walked out in his long pants and there were children playing in the street, but he was cold to them. He was severed from them, and they were nothing. Short pants made you look up to people and give way to them, but long pants made you master them. Now you were fit for the world and knew what things were for. How pleasant to feel the fabric of your trousers against your calves! Yesterday, you bought chocolates at this candy store, but would it look right to go along the street in your long pants, nibbling chocolates?

Michael looked back on himself yesterday in his short pants and felt a deep pity for himself. He had been so blind, yesterday, so insufficient. He saw himself, his long legs, his

tight knickerbockers, his long arms that hung limply by his sides. But today the world was mature. The sun had a strong, mature warmth in it. There was a proportion, a symmetry to the buildings, the streets. What could you do in short pants except grope and crave and forever be denied? But long pants gave you a place. You had walked out of your insufficient self, and look how that girl was smiling at you, and see how that man begged your pardon when he bumped into you.

Children are nothing, thought Michael as he walked along in his first long pants. They eat when they are hungry and sleep when they are tired, but they do not see the enticing legs of that girl and they do not know that beer is something less than bitter. So Michael suddenly felt a strong craving for beer and walked into the corner saloon, and marched straight up to the bar. And he said to the bartender, "A glass of beer."

"Ain't you young Singermann?"

"Yes."

"Well, we don't sell beer to minors."

The men drinking at the bar looked at Michael and laughed. Michael was nothing. He was as the sawdust sprinkled on the floor. He was lower than the spittoon on the floor. He felt the sweat breaking out on his face, and there were a thousand pin pricks of humiliation all over his skin.

But one man in a checked suit standing near the bar, said, "It's all right, Harry. I'll buy the kid a drink. He's got a thirst."

"Sure, I know, Tom. But he's a minor. You can see he's a minor."

"Aw, what the hell, Harry. A glass of beer won't kill him."

"All right. Sure. I don't give a damn. But he's a minor."

A schooner of beer foaming over at the top, slid across

the bar, and Michael grasped its thick glass handle and blew the foam off on the sawdust. The beer ran down his throat, into his stomach, down his thighs and seemed to love the feel of his long pants. Beer was good now that he was drinking it in his long pants. It was a man's drink, filling a man with a golden glow, lighting little torches all over his body until he was aflame for life. Michael stood there with one foot on the brass rail, his left elbow propped up on the bar, his right hand holding the schooner of beer. He liked the men about him, the rough, coarse-grained muckers with their filthy words and their slobbering lips. Good, lusty men drinking men's drinks, not lemonade and pop. Men who worked until the sweat oozed out of their pores, who cursed from down deep in their bodies and who drank deep into their gullets. They were men, and Michael loved them drinking his glass of beer just after he had put on his first long pants. He wanted to rub against them, to feel their heavy, damp hands on his body, to smell them, to roll with them in curses, to explore dark, subterranean passageways of life. Over the bar, on the wall, was a brilliantly colored picture of a nude woman. She was naked all over and she showed her breasts, her navel, her thighs unashamedly. That was the kind of naked woman for a man. She stood there on the wall, and she looked down on all the men drinking beer and whiskeys and gin, and she wasn't ashamed.

Michael planked down a nickel on the counter, and said, "Gimme another." And the bartender said, "Say, you're just a minor. I can't do that, kid. You'd git out o' here drunk, and then the house would be in a fine mess, a kid like you. You're just a kid."

"Give him another," said the man who had spoken up for Michael before. "And if he's drunk, I'll take him home."

Michael drank his second schooner of beer and the woman

in the picture on the wall seemed inviting him up to her, and he thought that it was time he had something to do with a woman like that. The beer sang through him and made him fearless. He could do anything. All his self-consciousness was numbed, all the things about him that were sensitive, were numbed. He could go up to anybody, talk to anybody at all, it didn't make any difference who the man or woman was. He walked out of the saloon towards the store and the first person he ran into was his father. Moses looked Michael up and down and was pleased. "Look, who's got on long pants, will you look?" asked Moses and laughed. Moses seemed genuinely delighted, and Michael was astonished because he had feared his father would be angry. But Moses was seeing his youngest son with different eyes. He was seeing him as a young man now, and not as a boy, and he was pleased all over. Moses did something very unusual. He put his arm around Michael, a kind of rough, embarrassed caress, and he said so that everybody in the store could hear, "Look, I got a man now. Look what has put on David's long pants. David, look. Look what's got on your old long pants."

All the brothers came up to see Michael, and Sol said, "That kid's got a hell of a nerve. What in the hell does he want to put on long pants for at his age?" But Moses and Harry were obviously pleased. Harry said, "He'll be good-looking when he fills out more. Only, he's got to fill out more." David looked sad for a minute, and he said, "The minute you put on long pants your troubles begin. I wish I'd never put on long pants. The minute you put 'em on you're changed . . . changed. . . ." And he looked at his youngest brother in such a way as to give Michael the impression that he was Michael no longer, but someone else detached from tenderness and clarity.

There was a new clerk in the store. Business had picked up to such an extent that Moses had gone and hired a

new clerk, Max Feiberg. Max was clever looking. He had been everywhere, seen everything; he had seen things that most people never talk about. Max Feiberg had explored the subterranean passageways of life. He drew Michael aside and felt of Michael all over and looked out of his narrow eyes at Michael. "Say, kid," he said, "you want a woman. Now that you got long pants, you want a woman. You're a man now."

Michael blushed, for the effect of the beer was growing quite thin, and he was beginning to react to his self-consciousness. "Aw, Max, stop talking. What do you want to talk that way to me for? Lemme alone."

"You want to go Down the Line with me tonight?" asked Max. "I'll meet you in front of Shilling's Cigar Store at eight o'clock and I'll take you Down the Line to the girls."

"I don't want to go," said Michael, suddenly afraid. "I don't want to go tonight. Some other night."

"Tonight," repeated Max Feiberg. "Tonight. It'll be an experience for you. Don't forget."

"Front, Max!" roared Moses. "There's a customer who knows you. Front!"

"Don't forget," whispered Max, and his whisper was insinuating. His whisper was sensuous and insinuating, and Michael was doped with the sensual possibilities of life. He stood there in the store where Max had left him and remembered the naked woman over the bar. There was a mystery there, a combination of curves, of lines, of desires. There was a tangled network there that he must untangle. He was in the dark and he must step out into the light. He must not always walk with this unsolved problem heavy on his shoulders, weighing him down into perplexity and pain. He must find the light, the stars of knowledge. He must take the sensuous, insinuating whisper and hold it to his eyes and see it plain.

That evening he went to Shilling's Cigar Store in his long pants, and there was Max Feiberg inside. "Come in," said Max. "Come in. I'll shake you for some cigarettes." Michael had never thrown dice before, and he didn't know whether he was winning or whether Max was winning; but it turned out that he had won, and Max bought the cigarettes. In the rear of the cigar store, men in their shirt-sleeves were shooting pool. There was the knock-knock-knock of balls and the subdued murmur of talk not fit for nice ears. Some of the men were wearing green eye-shades, and they drifted about with cigarettes hanging limply from their lips. They were dexterous, easy about their movements. They understood the cues and the balls and the cigarettes. There was nothing in life that they had not explored, and they had come out so sleek, with their noiseless, deft movements, their clever fingers, their tired eyes. Michael watched them and was fascinated at their knowingness. They had never read books; but they knew everything in life, and the way they exhaled the smoke out of their lungs and poked the cues at the balls was fascinating. The knock-knock-knock of the balls, the green shades over their eyes, the way the white smoke came straight and sharp through their nostrils.

"Come on," whispered Max into Michael's ear. "Now we'll go Down the Line."

"I don't think I want to go," said Michael. "If papa knew about this, he'd kill me. But maybe some other night." Michael wanted to run away. He wanted to run into the rear of the cigar store and hide under the pool tables where Max would not find him. Max would look for him everywhere. Where's that kid got to? Does anybody know what became of that kid who was here talking to me? And all the time, Michael would be hidden under the pool table, masked by smoke from the world about him, and he wouldn't have to go Down the Line.

"Come on," said Max, and the two walked out of Shilling's Cigar Store, down Main Street until they came to Galena, and then they walked east. Max held open a swinging gate and they were in the Red Light District, a kind of boardwalk with small houses lined up on either side. Girls came out and stood in the doorways inviting the passing men inside. Some of the girls had on flowered kimonos and some wore short dancing skirts as if they were dancers. Some of them were old, old enough to be Michael's mother, and some were even older. But Max took Michael before a certain crib and knocked on the door. A girl whose hair was black, cut short, answered the knock and she was picking her teeth with a match. "Look, I've brought you a nice kid. Treat him right, Flora," said Max. "You know, treat him right."

"Well, come in," said Flora. "Come in. I'm busy now, but I'll be with you in a few minutes."

If he could only run away to some pure place, some place in the fields under the sun, in the green fields alone. If he could only run far away where there were no men and women, men like Max, women like Flora with her short black hair. He would lie in the fields and maybe there would be a cow or a horse, but no people to be persecuting him. Things must be done and people were always persecuting you. But you wanted to be out there in the green fields where there were no men and no women. Only yourself and maybe cows and horses.

Max shoved him through the door and he was in a small room, and there was another room leading off this one, and there was only a dark curtain separating the two rooms. Flora said, "I'm busy. I got to go now, but you can have a drink. It'll cost you a quarter apiece."

"Sure, bring it in," said Max, and he put down a half dollar. "The kid needs courage. Drink it down, Mike. How do you feel?"

"Great," said Michael after he had gulped down the whiskey, a chariot of fire galloping down his throat. He was immensely warmed, aflame with warmth and desire. He did not want to run away any more. He was impatient for Flora to come back out of the room that was behind the dark curtain. Here he was on this side of the curtain, and things were as they had always been. But in the other room there was a great difference. Life was untangled. Life was clear and plain and it would never be tangled again and dark. There were voices from behind the dark curtain. A sigh of longing, a cry of despair, a moan half pain, half ecstasy. First there was that desire in you, and you were afraid of it. But could you be afraid all your life and never take apart the pattern and look at it and see it plain? Could you grope all your life in the darkness of despair without ever knowing what lay beyond—beyond the dark curtain?

"Listen to them," said Max. "Listen. Do you know what's going on in there? Something's happening in there. Here, take another shot of whiskey."

Michael sat back in his chair and the room no longer seemed real to him. He had left the room and stood midway between the life of his childhood and the life of his manhood. His manhood was in there beyond the dark curtain. His manhood was in there in a man's mutterings, a woman's despair.

Max poked Michael in the ribs. "Do you hear that?" Max's eyes looked strange and his lips were damp and red. "Boy, boy!" cried Max, getting up out of his chair, striding back and forth, up and down the room. "I'd give anything to be young like you, Mike. I'd give anything!"

"You get the hell out of here," the woman's voice was saying from behind the curtain. "You damn cheap skate, you get the hell out of here."

A tall, lank man came out from behind the dark curtain

and he did not look at Michael or Max, but walked straight out. "All right," came Flora's voice. "All right."

"Go in," said Max to Michael. "Go in. She's waiting for you. Don't sit there. Go in."

Michael rose from his chair and he looked as though he were in a trance. His face was bloodless, his walk mechanical. He stood before the dark curtain and lifted his long hand. His fingers parted the dark curtain and he walked away into the room beyond.

Max sat in his chair and closed his eyes and opened them again. He leaned far back in his chair and seemed to be catching the moments in his hands and holding them to his wet, red lips. He seemed to hear everything from the back room, the sighs of longing, of despair. And then he studied the dark curtain and watched it steadily. His eyes shot out of his head and fastened themselves on the curtain. He leaned forward in his chair and watched Michael emerge from beyond. Michael came out, and Flora said, "All right."

"Well, how did you like it, kid?" asked Max. He took Michael in his arms. He pressed the boy in his arms. He put his fingers through Michael's hair. He seemed to soak the boy into himself. "How did you like it?" he whispered.

"Great," said Michael mechanically. "Where's my hat? I'm going home."

"All right!" cried Flora from the inner room. Michael tore himself from Max's embrace and stumbled out of the crib. He walked away and wished that he were some place far away, not here, but in a green field where there were no men, no women, only the sky and the fields. He wanted to be near a waterfall, to throw himself into the water and let himself be soaked, submerged, away from here and now. But the desire for purity was self-conscious now and smirked in Michael's face, and before it had been a simple desire and clear as crystal.

He went to his room and got into bed, and he kept thinking that it had been a disappointing experience, not as he thought it would be. He had thought of the tangle, of the dark pattern that he would some day take apart and hold before his eyes. And now he had taken it apart and held it before his eyes but he had not seen it. Once more it was a tangle, and he felt all wrong, all wrong and somehow in a condition of decay, and he was sorry that he had passed beyond the dark curtain. There was so much talk about it, so much said and unsaid, but now it was done, and there was only a feeling of disappointment. He should have waited until he met his true love and then the experience would have been beautiful, and everything would have been made clear. And in his dreams, Michael pursued a gay, lively, youthful phantom. He caught up with the phantom at last and he looked into the phantom's eyes. And he saw that the one he had been pursuing was himself before he had gone beyond the dark curtain. He wanted to hold the phantom, but it ran off, afraid. And he was alone in the dark and he wept. "Come back! Come back!" he called, and the phantom was a far-away luminance, a light in the sky at dawn.

In the morning, Michael remembered his dream but could not see where it had any sense in the daylight. He drew on his clothes and felt tall and powerful. He walked about the room with a firm step. He sang, and his voice sounded deeper in his ears, and responsible. And so when he left the house, and with the busy daylight all about him, he recalled many of his thoughts of the evening before and felt that they were silly. The whole business was hardly worth thinking about, it was so silly.

TWELVE: DAVID AND MAXINE

Maxine and Rebecca did not get along well in the same house. David's wife had come with the intention of being waited upon, and she had to get her own meals, because Rebecca would not cook for her, because the hired girl resented the added burden of housework. In the beginning, Maxine attempted to win her mother-in-law to her side, but Rebecca could not forget that Maxine had come from Galena Street. Michael could feel the sharp enmity between his mother and his sister-in-law the moment he stepped into the house. At first, he had felt sorry for Maxine, she was so pretty and young. He liked her golden hair piled high on her head. She was never up when he left the house in the morning, but when he came home from school at noon, she sat at the luncheon table with him, and she made a number of delicious things to eat. Rebecca's meals were lacking in variety, but Maxine knew how to prepare fancy salads and desserts and wonderful pies. Michael looked forward to luncheon because Rebecca left everything to Maxine and wouldn't eat the dishes her daughter-in-law prepared. Maxine had her own cooking utensils, but she complained that the food never had the right taste because she couldn't use lard. Rebecca would have thrown a fit if Maxine had brought pork into the house. So when Maxine went out to dinner with David on three evenings every week, she always ordered pork chops or roast ham or pig's knuckles. Michael knew about these dinners; afterward, Maxine would tell him what she had ordered, describing each course minutely.

Maxine had her softer moments. She would tell Michael

about Chicago and the shows she had seen there. It seemed to Michael that Maxine had been everywhere and seen everything. She was a great one for traveling, she said. Whereupon Rebecca would interrupt to say that it was about time Maxine started traveling again, but she said it in Yiddish and under her breath. Maxine seemed to realize what Rebecca was saying, for she would whisper to Michael, "The old lady's sore at me again. But I ain't goin' to be here much longer. I'm goin' to have my own little flat."

After the evening meal, Maxine and David would go into their own bedroom and shut the door after them. When they were first married, Michael could hear them spooning in there. Maxine would be sitting on David's lap and calling him "honey" and "darling" and all kinds of soft, cooing names. But that didn't last long. After a few weeks there were quarrels at the supper table between Maxine and Rebecca; and, of course, David would take Maxine's part. And they would both go into their bedroom and slam the door after them. "She won't even wet her hands washing her own dishes," Rebecca would say. But when Maxine offered to help with the dishes, Rebecca replied, "No, the girl can do it. Why do you want to spoil the girl?"

After a few weeks, Maxine was nagging David all the time, and Michael could hear them through the bedroom door. "I'm sick and tired of it, I tell you, sick and tired," Maxine was saying. "I didn't marry you to come and live with your family. That mother of yours, she hates me, and all o' them swell brothers o' yours hate me. I'm goin' to leave, that's what. I'll leave first thing in the morning. I don't have to put up with this. I lived before I met you, David Singermann, and I don't have to put up with things like this."

Then David's voice would start up, pleading with her to have a little patience. "We'll have our own house," David would say, "if you'll only wait awhile."

"When I married you, I thought you had money."

"Well, I told you I wasn't rich."

"I won't stand for it another minute," said Maxine, and Michael could hear her dragging suitcases across the room and slamming her trunk open and shut. David's voice would be pleading through all this noise, "I know it's hard for you. I'll try to make it easier after a while. I got so many troubles, why don't you have a little patience?"

Then Maxine lost her temper. It broke out of her like a flame and scorched everything about her and seemed to be burning David to cinders. "Patience? I'm wasting my whole youth on you, that's what I'm doing! Did I ask to marry you? No, you came around me, beggin' me to be nice, an' I had to take you, damn fool that I was. But I've stood all I'm going to from you and your family." The argument would continue all evening, back and forth, and Michael would hear David weeping in there while Maxine toppled over chairs and slammed drawers and threw around toilet articles. Finally, Maxine would begin weeping, too, and then Michael would hear them both, just weeping in those terrible voices. Bedtime, Maxine would come out to go to the bathroom and all her beauty was hidden under red splotches on her skin, and her eyes looked as if they had been scalded. David would emerge, pale and wretched looking, and Michael could not bear to watch that brother of his who had always been so happy in the old days.

Maxine ordered a dress at one of the expensive stores, and Rebecca found out that it cost thirty dollars and she flew into a rage. The two women hacked at one another with sharp-edged words all that day, and Rebecca told Maxine to get out of the house. "You dirty woman! You snake of a woman!" cried Rebecca. "You took my son because he didn't know better, and now you are stealing all my money, my husband's money, the money my sons have worked for all their lives! Get out, you filthy woman!"

Maxine said that she would damn well get out. She wouldn't have come in the first place, only she thought she was going to live with a lady and not a common woman. "When I think of my own mother!" sobbed Maxine. "My own mother, so good and generous, and who would 'a' give me the underwear off her back——"

"God knows if you ever had a mother!" screamed Rebecca. "David found you in a room where you had every man in Silver Bow——"

"That's a damned lie!" interrupted Maxine. "All the men who come to see me was real gentlemen. But I was such a damn fool, I went and picked that son of yours. Gawd! What a fool I am!"

Maxine packed all her things and sent them to the Thornton Hotel. And after she had gone in a taxicab, Rebecca told Mary O'Brien that her best towels were missing. "And not only that," said Rebecca, "but she went to the hotel which is the most expensive in Silver Bow. The rooms there you can't get under two dollars a day, and maybe they cost more with a bath. Do you think a woman like that would take a room what didn't have a bath?"

David came home from the store that evening to find his bridal chamber dismantled and deserted. He looked about with him haunted eyes before he went to ask Rebecca what had happened. "I try to be nice to her and she spits in my face," sobbed Rebecca. "Is this the thanks I should get for bringing seven children into the world? You stay home, David. Don't you go after such a woman. Don't you go. It's a shame for a big, grown boy like you to run after such a woman what has had every man in Silver Bow."

"It's a lie!" screamed David, and he was as a man pierced and riven by anguish. "She's my wife, and I won't have my wife insulted! She's a wonderful woman, a wonderful wife. . . ." He was out of the house running all the way to the hotel, a man pursued by anguish.

There would be moments of the day when David would sit down with himself and try to reason this thing out. He would remember how he had first come to Maxine's room in the Ansonia Block looking for a good time, and he would remember how he had completely forgotten Lina Bachmann the moment he had seen Maxine. It was as though a poison had been given him, a golden, maddening poison that he had taken willingly, that had transformed him from a thoughtless happiness to a sentient anxiety. He had not dreamed that a woman could so take possession of a man, become a part of him, so that the thought of her leaving him was like cutting off a limb. But it was worse than that. If Maxine should take it into her head to leave him, she would take his life with her, his beating heart and his days and nights. She would take the momentum out of his days and they would be mere dates on a calendar, robbed of their reason for being, for dawning into light, for passing from light to darkness. She would leave him nights shot through with white holes of wakefulness, of longing and desperation. David would sit with himself and think of these things. He would realize that Maxine had brought him terror and fear, self-pity and humiliation, yet they were all movement and warmth of life, and without them he would wander through a living death.

Maxine found a house on the Flats, a newly erected bungalow with a garage, and she moved in with new and expensive furniture purchased on the installment plan. She took thirty of the forty dollars David was paid every week, and spent the money on furniture, food, and clothes for herself. David's suits were threadbare and shiny, and his shoes were worn through the soles, but a strange excitement gripped his heart when he entered the house. He came to know every nook and cranny in it by heart. He knew the fresh gray-blue paint on the picket-fence, the paved walk that led to the front steps, the spacious veranda with the

hammock hanging diagonally from pillar to pillar. He could smell the varnish of the hardwood floors, and he knew the patterns of the rugs on these floors. The patterns were pressed into his mind, and at odd moments of the day they would become clear and plain in his eyes when he was piling merchandise or waiting on a customer. Each piece of the new furniture occupied a place in his mind, a chair, a table, a bed. They were cleanly dusted and freshly varnished in his consciousness. Everything in the house was a part of his need of Maxine, from the brass knob on the front door to the wire screens in the bedroom. The neatness and cleanliness of his house constituted parts of his urgent and renewing desire for Maxine.

The change from the old life to the new had left Maxine without a single friend. Everyone knew her, but few cared to be found in her company, even though she was respectably married. She could not help feeling an angry disappointment in this state of affairs. But this was only one aspect of her general disillusionment. She had thought that David would provide her with a generous allowance of money, and it had turned out that his income was very small with little chance of its becoming larger in the near future. She had hoped for friends and none had appeared except those vagrant, insufficient people she had known before her marriage. She had even hoped that she might grow to love David as she had loved no man in her life; but now he was growing colorless before her eyes; his passion was consuming all his youth, his vitality, and charm. So she conceived a passion for the bungalow on the Flats, and bought furniture, painted floors, sought new ways to add to the freshness and color of her interior arrangements. She discovered new recipes out of a large cookbook and contrived excellent dinners. But all these devices grew boring after a short time. She would weep when David came home, and when he attempted to soothe her, she would rail at him

and cry out that she was a fool to have married him. And it was all an insidious golden poison that he had taken into his body, a poison that he could not be rid of, that was wasting him away.

Michael was the only one of the Singermanns who ever visited the bungalow on the Flats. None of the others would come because they had grown to despise Maxine. They looked on her as a vampire who was fastened on David, sucking out his life-blood into her body. They could not understand that she had married David for happiness. At first Michael had liked her, she was so beautiful with her golden hair and her white skin; but he saw her with never a kindly word for David or a helpful action, and he, too, came to dislike her. Yet he was fascinated by her wild, unruly tempers, her moments of undisciplined rage, and he tried to understand why she should act the way she did. But one day he went to the bungalow on the Flats to deliver a package for David, and he found a man's hat on the dining-room table. He wondered who the man might be. The hat was not David's. Michael looked all over the house and he could not find Maxine, but when he tried the bedroom door it was locked, and Michael knew that the man was in there with Maxine.

Michael was fifteen when he discovered this, and he ran out of the house as fast as he could, and he ran all the way back to the store, miserable and ashamed that a sister-in-law of his could be playing such a mean trick on one of his brothers.

David asked him, "Did you deliver the package? Was Maxine home?"

Michael felt a great contempt for David at that moment; he knew a desire to kill his brother with words. If he should tell David the truth, what would happen? But Michael only blushed deeply and said that he had delivered the

package, but he had not seen Maxine around the house. Maybe she had been in the back yard or in the cellar. Michael wasn't sure.

David looked at Michael queerly as if he were guessing at the truth. David seemed to be standing there with all his life running out of him, forming a pool of blood on the floor. Did he know that Maxine was being unfaithful to him, wondered Michael? And if he knew, what was he going to do about it?

Michael made up a prayer that night, and he said in it that he would never tell anyone about the man in Maxine's bedroom. But a week later, Sol came home and said that he had been out to Gregson Springs with some friends, and he had seen Maxine dancing with a strange man in the dance hall there. Gregson Springs was a natural hot springs and people were supposed to go there to take baths. But everyone knew that most people went there for other reasons. It was fifteen miles west of Silver Bow, but you could drive there in a car in about a half hour.

"Did she see you?" asked Louis. "Wasn't she ashamed or anything?"

"She made off she didn't notice me," replied Sol. "The man was a traveling man for Benson-Jones out of Chicago."

"Well, I guess David knows about it," said Louis. "He's just enough of a damn fool to let her do what she wants."

"Oh, sure," said Harry. "David must know about it. Poor fellow."

Rebecca started to weep at the dinner table; and Moses got up and went into the bedroom and threw himself upon the bed. They could hear him sighing in there.

For days, Michael went about thinking of David and Maxine and of the man in her bedroom. In the store, Michael would watch his brother and try to understand what David was composed of, the things that made up his

life. Michael couldn't understand how a grown man could give way to a woman, give her everything he had, and then see her throw all these things in the mud as if she didn't care a bit. Michael was sure that when he began going about with women, he would never let one of them, not even the most beautiful of them, take possession of him the way Maxine had taken possession of David.

The next thing Maxine did was to sell all her furniture and buy an automobile. One evening David came home and he saw that the house was empty. The hammock was gone off the front porch, the hardwood floors were bare of rugs, the furniture was gone. David felt as though he had been robbed of things that had been installed with a deep human permanence in his succession of days and nights. The pattern of the rugs, the fresh, grainy smell of the furniture, the intimate, unspeakable affection for a home, were murdered in him, and the blood ran cold and unfamiliar through his veins. He shivered in the empty house, the draughty, barren house that had been so well lived in only this morning. He passed into the bedroom and its emptiness was the cut of a sharp steel blade on his unmasked face. The bed where he had slept last night with Maxine was gone. It had filled the room and softened out sharp edges of the day. There was a note pinned to the wall. "Am back at the Thornton Hotel. Meet me there for dinner. Maxine."

When David got to the hotel, Maxine ran to the door of the room she had taken, and she was laughing and filled with a crazy, bubbling happiness. "I called you up at the store, but you was gone, honey," she greeted him. "I could 'a' saved you that trip out to the house. But I just couldn't help it. I bought the runabout we was lookin' at the other evening. You know, that peachy blue car. It's the prettiest blue you ever seen, just the color of my spring dress, you know the one. It was twelve-fifty, and I had to sell the furniture to get it. But I was thinkin', you need the air,

honey. After being in the store all day, you need the fresh air more than I do."

"But all that money," said David. "Twelve hundred and fifty dollars. That's a fortune. Why that's almost as much as I draw in a year. And the furniture couldn't 'a' brought more than six hundred. And where are we going to get the other six hundred and fifty?"

Maxine's face grew tensely sewn, as if her features had been threaded tight. David knew that expression that came into her face whenever she was displeased. "There you go again," she said. "For pity's sake, why don't you ask your father for a raise? Are you goin' to be poor all your life? God damn such an existence is what I say. You poor sap."

"What possessed you all of a sudden?" asked David, showing one of his rare bursts of spirit. "Why didn't you tell me you was going to sell all the furniture and move into a hotel? I come home and find the house empty, the rugs off the floor, the furniture gone, the piano gone." David thought sadly of the beautiful mahogany piano. When he had come into the house after working all day at the store, the warm wine-red of the piano had become infused into his blood. "That was a good piano," he added.

"Well, the house is there," answered Maxine crisply. "Go back and live in it. But I'll be damned if I go with you."

"A hotel is not a home," complained David. "All barren and small and crowded together in one room. A hotel is a place where you stay for a night and move on. There's nothing homelike about a hotel."

"Move on," said Maxine peevishly. "That's what I'll do one of these days—move on. And get myself a real man."

"Don't!" he answered involuntarily. "Don't say that." He seated himself on the bed and rested his head in his hands. "It's all right about the car. I was only saying, maybe it would have been better if you'd told me beforehand. I was

a little surprised, that's all. But I'm really glad you bought it. Now I can get out in the fresh air. It'll do me good."

"Well, why didn't you say so in the first place?" said Maxine. "Why do you have to come home and get mad at me? Is that a way to treat your wife? Do you think there's someone closer to you than your own wife is?"

"No," and he rose and approached her. He slipped one arm about her waist, but she flung it aside with her hand. "Coming home and nagging me. All you do is nag, nag, nag. I never saw such a man for nagging."

"All right, let's go down and eat," he suggested timidly.

Someone knocked on the door of their room, and Maxine said, "Oh, that must be the man with the bed. I told the clerk to send up another bed."

"I got the bed, lady," said the porter after Maxine had opened the door. "Oh, yes," she answered. "It comes right in here. Let's see. You might put it up against this wall. Meanwhile, we'll eat. Come on, for Pete's sake. Let's get something to eat. How can the man put up the bed with us standin' here? I'm hungry as a wolf."

He walked along behind her to the elevator, and the heart had gone out of him. He seemed like a dog, a dog that had once been strong and nimble, but which now followed cowering at the heels of his mistress.

"What did you get another bed for, Max?" he asked as they waited for the elevator.

She turned about coldly. "Can't you see they's people all around?" she asked angrily. "Why don't you begin talking about your most intimate affairs? You might hire a hall and invite the whole town to hear the story of your married life."

They were wedged to the rear wall of the elevator, and when they got down into the dining room, they had to stand waiting for a table. "Gee, this place is gettin' to be real busy," remarked Maxine. Everybody looked at her as she

stood near the door waiting for a table, she was so well-formed and her golden hair looked so lovely in the soft, rose-tinted light. The men looked at her in a special kind of way. I used to know that woman somewhere. I've seen her before. Good Lord, I remember. . . . She got married to that David Singermann. My Lord, I used to know that woman. She's a pippin. The women looked at Maxine in a special kind of way. She's very handsome, but bad-tempered around the eyes. I can see where men would be crazy about her type. She's got a wonderful figure. Her hair is lovely. Is that her husband, I wonder? If he is, I feel sorry for him. But she is real handsome.

"God, it's good to eat food that I ain't cooked myself," said Maxine after they had been seated at a table off to one side. The head waiter knew Maxine, and when he pushed her chair close to the table, he let his hands linger for a moment on her shoulders.

"But I'll miss your cooking," said David. "Say, that was a wonderful dinner you made last night. There's nothing like home cooking."

"Yaa, you've had too much of a good thing, you have," Maxine chided him. "Look at my hands, all red and chunky from washin' dishes. I'm ashamed of my hands ever since I married you."

Halfway through the meal, he said, "I don't know why you should want another bed in the room. I can't see . . . What's got into you?"

"Can it," she answered curtly. "Why don't you make a speech while you're about it?"

"Well, I don't see . . . You're my wife . . . "

"For Christ's sake," she whispered.

They finished their meal in silence. When they were once more in their room, Maxine began to change her clothes for the motor ride. David kept looking at the extra bed. He did not seem to be able to lift his eyes off it. He felt of its

softness with his hands, then sat down upon it and brooded. "What's the idea?" he asked in a thin voice. He was robbed of Maxine's proximity at night. He remembered a night some years ago when he had been skating at the rink. The ice had suddenly cracked under him and he had fallen into freezing black water up to his knees. This thought brought him back to the reality of the bed.

"The idea is that I want to sleep by myself," she answered. "I'm worn out an' I need rest. I'm high strung an' I got to sleep by myself. Come on, for Pete's sake. Get into your coat if you want me to take you for a ride. Ain't life sad enough without your mopin' all the time?"

"Well, I'm not going to stand for it!" he cried in a loud voice. "Ain't you done enough to me? You take all my money, you take away my home, my furniture. I don't want to stand for it. It's a shame. You don't need this bed."

"You go straight to Hell!"

He slumped down further in the bed and began to weep. "Oh, the baby's crying again." She tied a veil tightly about her face so that her words were choked the moment they were spoken.

"I know," he said brokenly. "You've been out with another man. You thought I didn't know, but I know."

Maxine began chewing that part of the veil close to her mouth. Her sharp white teeth bit through the thin material, and she saw that she had ruined it. She tore it off her face and flung it on the floor. "Sure. I been out with a couple of men," she replied. "And what's more, I'm thinkin' of goin' out with 'em again." She despised him for weeping in that way, a grown man, heavy and strong, weeping like a child. She wanted him to get up and strike her, whip her for her sins. She would have pleaded with him, "Oh, David, have pity! Don't beat me! I promise to be good! I won't do it again! Oh, you're hurting me! For God's sake, David!" She would have truly loved him then, and he would have

been her master. But to see him sitting on the edge of the bed like this, weak, impotent, sniffling like a half-wit, that made her despise him. She saw him under her heel, and he was like soft, melting taffy. She was doing a clog dance on his face, over his chest. He was weak all over, like mush, and he expected her to sleep with him. "Are you comin' for a ride?" she asked impatiently.

"No! No!" he sobbed. "I can't. Oh, Max, why did you do it? What will people in this town think? How will it look to people, you going out with men like that?"

"Good night!" she said. "If you're not comin', I'll take the drive by myself!" And she slammed the door after her. He lay still for a few minutes, and then reached for his coat, hastily. He put on his hat and ran downstairs. But when he reached the sidewalk, she had driven away.

Michael was coming out of school one afternoon with books under his arm when Maxine passed in her blue roadster. They saw each other at the same time, and she waved quickly and drew in at the curb. "Want to take a little spin, Mike?" she asked. "Out to the Nine Mile Canyon?"

Michael felt very grand to think that an automobile should draw up to the sidewalk just for him. Automobiles were still rather uncommon in Silver Bow, and only a few of the more prosperous families had them. He forgot his dislike for Maxine, and he said that he would like a ride very much. He saw himself stepping into the bright blue runabout and sitting beside Maxine who was very beautiful in her black dress with the string of imitation pearls about her throat. He saw himself being stared at by his schoolmates, and he hoped that Mr. Millikin, the principal, saw him getting into the runabout and settling back against the soft leather seat.

Maxine's hands were strong and they managed the wheel

with little exertion. She was smiling today, and her eyes did not have that hard, sullen look he had seen in them so many times. He wondered if they all had not been rather unfair to her. She had come into the family expecting a life of ease with plenty of money and servants and a special maid to look after her dresses. She had expected David to make her be careful, but he was like mush and she could have only contempt for him. Michael felt himself slipping into a critical admiration for her strength, her energy, her fine, strong body, her lovely black dress. She was so different from himself, so golden fair, so like bright sunshine in the dimness of his life.

She drove down Arizona Street, and they were in the dry, copper-colored Flats. Michael felt that if he reached out his arms he could touch the mountains and push them over. There were two kinds of scenery. Walking along, you saw things slow and mighty, and plains and trees and mountains were almost overwhelming in their greatness. But riding along, you were master of everything, and even the Rockies did not seem so high, so breath-taking. You could span the plains with five fingers outstretched, and the mountains were no higher than your thumb. What a beautiful world, thought Michael as Maxine increased the speed from thirty to forty miles an hour. They were riding away from the copper mines, the city that lay drifting in the heavy salt seas of sulphur fumes. They were catching up with pure air and the tempestuous Rockies and the high inspirational fragrance of pine trees. This is the road that takes you along to Helena, through the silent, dim canyon of the Nine Mile. If you ride long enough, you pass by Boulder Hot Springs, Rainbow City, Diamond Basin, Pinnepapa. Half a day's ride and you are lost in the wild glamour of tumbling streams and the sweet waves that break through the tallest branches of the trees. This is a country that not so long ago was undiscovered. What did the red men think when they

first glimpsed these high mountains and these steep canyons? What did they dream when they lay down at night under the icy stars, in the tumultuous beauty of Montana?

"When I was a little girl," said Maxine, "I thought, 'Gee, wouldn't it be swell to go out West and see the mountains.' I lived in Ioway and everything there is level. Your eyes get tired always seeing flat country. I used to dream about the mountains."

"But I'd like to see level country," said Michael. "And I'd like to see the ocean. I'd like to see the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. But you couldn't live a minute in them, I bet. If you should fall off a ship into the Atlantic Ocean, you'd be just a speck, and you'd be dead in a minute. The oceans are three-fourths of the world, but they've been drying up since the beginning of time."

"What I say is, while you're alive, enjoy everything," said Maxine. She was racing the runabout past the cemeteries. First there appeared the Catholic cemetery, then the Protestant, then the Jewish. There was a tall iron fence that ran along by the road, and beyond were the tombstones of marble and granite. They had picked the dead, arid Flats for the cemeteries, and people had been dead there for different times. Some had been dead only a day, and some had been dead for thirty, forty years. "Cemeteries give me the willies," said Maxine. "The only thing I'm scared of is dyin'. Bein' dead, that's awful."

"Maybe not actually being dead," said Michael. "It's the thought of being dead. Still and quiet and knowing nothing. The wind blows about you, but you don't hear it in your ears the way we're hearing it now. The sun shines warm down on you, and maybe it penetrates through the ground right down into the coffin and warms your body. But you don't know it. That's funny."

"Oh, don't talk about it," sighed Maxine. "It makes me

shiver. I'm not going to look at the cemetery. Tell me when we've passed it. When I die I'll have 'em cremate me. I want to be burned into ashes. I wouldn't like to be under the ground. I'll leave a will and say in it that I want to be cremated."

"We've passed the cemetery now," said Michael.

"I suppose," said Maxine suddenly, keeping her eyes on the road, "that you think I'm a terrible woman. Well, in a way I don't blame you. I've had a pretty rough life, but say, we can't order our lives, can we?"

"I don't think you're a terrible woman," mumbled Michael, and he felt his cheeks burning even in the whistling, cool wind.

"Well, I ain't got no apologies to offer," said Maxine. "Hell. Doin' wrong is accordin' to what you think is wrong. I don't think I ever done a reel wrong thing in my whole life. Other people has seen me doin' wrong, because it was in their minds. But I only ached for life. Anything that gives me pleasure, that can't be wrong, can it? Now you take me an' David. When I married him I'd come to a point in my life where I had to do somethin' or quit. I had to get married or keep goin' on the way I had been. An' I loved David at first. I reely did. It was reel romantic. I suppose you think I'm talkin' a lot o' nonsense. But I ain't at all. Only, I guess you're too young to understand."

Michael wanted to ask her, Didn't she think it was wrong to have other men on the side when she was married? But he could not bring himself to ask that question. His face burned at the very thought of asking it.

When Maxine drove her car through the Nine Mile Canyon, Michael forgot everything fleshly, and he forgot that woman beside him was being unfaithful to his brother. On either side rose the sloping walls of the canyon, closing out the galloping world about them. As they drove deeper into the chasm, they descended away from a world of men and

felt the purity of their tryst with this unmarked, uncontaminated region. Great boulders of granite hung over them, the terrible and thunderous ribs of the canyon. Some of these giant rocks had grown green and kindly in their incalculable age, and from their crevices flowers and bushes were growing. The dark walls of the canyon seemed to be holding back the surge of the restless, wild earth that strove to cover, with its importunate caress, the smooth, immaculate whiteness of the road.

Three miles down the canyon, Maxine drove into a grassy clearing just off the road, and stopped the car. For a minute she and Michael sat silently in their places and listened to the soft furor of the leaves and the insistent minor melody of the brook. The wind rushed down the road and clambered gustily up their limbs and blew coolly against their eyes. Then Maxine got out at one side and Michael at the other, and they went to find the brook singing along from some keen, secret source. The brook was clear and the stones at the bottom were white and rounded. Maxine began taking off her shoes and stockings. She pinned up her dress and started wading in the cool, tingling ripples. Michael saw her feet splaying down the golden sand; he saw her feet and legs looking bluish white under the water. It was strange to see Maxine this way, wading in the brook. Michael was more confused than ever before. He did not know what to think of his sister-in-law who was so beastly to David and yet loved to wade in cool brooks.

"God, I love Nature," said Maxine, and tore off her hat and threw it away so that it floated on to the bushes and stayed there like some enormous flower. "That's why I'm crazy about California," she continued, throwing back her head and inviting the wind to blow through her hay-colored hair. Under artificial light it was golden, but now beneath the trees it was hay-colored with green shadows playing through the strands. "In California," she said, "you can ride

along for miles and you're always out in the most beautiful country you ever seen."

"You look funny like that," laughed Michael, "with your dress pinned up like that and your feet bare. You don't look like Maxine at all. You look like somebody who's escaped from Maxine and has run away."

Maxine was pleased. She smiled, and little lines gathered at the corners of her eyes and made her look sweet and charming. Had David ever seen those little lines at the corners of her eyes, or had he become the slave of that Maxine who had emerged from some loud and heavily perfumed room Down the Line? Michael wanted to tell David about this Maxine. He wanted to tell his brother that he had seen Maxine with her shoes and stockings off, wading in a brook out at the Nine Mile.

"Are you hungry, Mike?" she asked, coming up out of the water and shaking her feet free of dampness. "There's some sandwiches I brought along in the car. They're in one of the pockets on the side, I forgot which. Do you like goose-liver sandwiches? Go and get them like a nice boy."

Michael brought the sandwiches, and he and Maxine found a smooth granite rock upon which they seated themselves. They began eating the goose-liver sandwiches while the wind blew clouds of leaves across a sky of silence. "It's too bad David isn't out here," Michael said. "It's too bad he has to be down at the store while we're out here enjoying ourselves."

"That brother o' yours gives me the pip," said Maxine. "Don't be surprised if I light out one of these days. We don't get along at all. He's not a man."

"You oughtn't to say that," muttered Michael. "You're too hard on him."

"He certainly gives me a pain in the wrong place," insisted Maxine. "I should never 'a' married him. It was a big mistake. I thought we'd get to like each other reel well, but

felt the purity of their tryst with this unmarked, uncontaminated region. Great boulders of granite hung over them, the terrible and thunderous ribs of the canyon. Some of these giant rocks had grown green and kindly in their incalculable age, and from their crevices flowers and bushes were growing. The dark walls of the canyon seemed to be holding back the surge of the restless, wild earth that strove to cover, with its importunate caress, the smooth, immaculate whiteness of the road.

Three miles down the canyon, Maxine drove into a grassy clearing just off the road, and stopped the car. For a minute she and Michael sat silently in their places and listened to the soft furor of the leaves and the insistent minor melody of the brook. The wind rushed down the road and clambered gustily up their limbs and blew coolly against their eyes. Then Maxine got out at one side and Michael at the other, and they went to find the brook singing along from some keen, secret source. The brook was clear and the stones at the bottom were white and rounded. Maxine began taking off her shoes and stockings. She pinned up her dress and started wading in the cool, tingling ripples. Michael saw her feet splaying down the golden sand; he saw her feet and legs looking bluish white under the water. It was strange to see Maxine this way, wading in the brook. Michael was more confused than ever before. He did not know what to think of his sister-in-law who was so beastly to David and yet loved to wade in cool brooks.

"God, I love Nature," said Maxine, and tore off her hat and threw it away so that it floated on to the bushes and stayed there like some enormous flower. "That's why I'm crazy about California," she continued, throwing back her head and inviting the wind to blow through her hay-colored hair. Under artificial light it was golden, but now beneath the trees it was hay-colored with green shadows playing through the strands. "In California," she said, "you can ride

along for miles and you're always out in the most beautiful country you ever seen."

"You look funny like that," laughed Michael, "with your dress pinned up like that and your feet bare. You don't look like Maxine at all. You look like somebody who's escaped from Maxine and has run away."

Maxine was pleased. She smiled, and little lines gathered at the corners of her eyes and made her look sweet and charming. Had David ever seen those little lines at the corners of her eyes, or had he become the slave of that Maxine who had emerged from some loud and heavily perfumed room Down the Line? Michael wanted to tell David about this Maxine. He wanted to tell his brother that he had seen Maxine with her shoes and stockings off, wading in a brook out at the Nine Mile.

"Are you hungry, Mike?" she asked, coming up out of the water and shaking her feet free of dampness. "There's some sandwiches I brought along in the car. They're in one of the pockets on the side, I forgot which. Do you like goose-liver sandwiches? Go and get them like a nice boy."

Michael brought the sandwiches, and he and Maxine found a smooth granite rock upon which they seated themselves. They began eating the goose-liver sandwiches while the wind blew clouds of leaves across a sky of silence. "It's too bad David isn't out here," Michael said. "It's too bad he has to be down at the store while we're out here enjoying ourselves."

"That brother o' yours gives me the pip," said Maxine. "Don't be surprised if I light out one of these days. We don't get along at all. He's not a man."

"You oughtn't to say that," muttered Michael. "You're too hard on him."

"He certainly gives me a pain in the wrong place," insisted Maxine. "I should never 'a' married him. It was a big mistake. I thought we'd get to like each other reel well, but

a mist. First, there was the Jewish cemetery, then the Protestant, and last of all, the Catholic. The atmosphere had a cooler edge now, and the first aimless drops of rain had begun to fall. As the night grew darker, the wind would blow with a stronger will and the rain would fall in steady, purposeful lines; but the men, women, and children in the cemeteries would lie there unheeding of the wind and rain. The rain would fall upon their mounds and seep down to their bones, but they would not know, the dead. They would lie there forever and would not know about the wind and the rain.

Maxine left the silent darkness of the Flats behind her, and they entered into the city limits of Silver Bow. The first houses, with their lights burning behind drawn shades, showed themselves through the wet night, and the streets glimmered and twinkled in the rain. They were in the town again, and people lived here and slept here warm and close to one another. Maxine relaxed and drove more slowly. The lights and sounds of the town seemed to penetrate within her, and she moved restlessly in her seat. They were far away from the copper mines on the hill, but they could see the lights of the tall towers winking down upon them, flashes of melting gold through the mist. There was life showing itself to Maxine, and she drove her car into its very heart. Michael caught vaguely at her thoughts, the fringes of her restless desires. And was it not this way with Maxine? She loved living and moving and dancing. She loved anger and misunderstanding and combat. But quiet and content were shunned by her. She wanted lights, and she stretched out her arms to them until they burned themselves into her flesh; but she fled from darkness, from the legions of shadows that pursued her. If there was a brook, she must wade in it. If there were rocks, she must climb upon them. Where there was music she would dance and where there were men who took her fancy, she would love, not with

reason, not wanly, but wildly and freely she would give herself. Where there were shops, she would enter, saying, This is a pretty dress. Send it to me. This is a stunning hat. I will wear it. And when she was bored and things were dull for her, she would say, "I'm going to light out. I'm going to travel. This is one hell of a town." Always, she would fly past the cemeteries, the tombstones where lay the dead. But when they put her away or burned her to ashes, she would no longer clutch at the lights and hold them close until they burned into her flesh. She would know quiet tranquillity then, and a million days and nights of peace. But she would no longer be Maxine when she was dead, when she was ashes.

So Michael stepped out of the car and thanked her for the ride out to the Nine Mile. He stepped out of the car when they reached the corner of Park and Main Streets, and he had clutched vaguely at the fluttering enigma that was Maxine. No man older than Michael would ever understand Maxine. David would always be haunted by the mysterious lights and shades that played through her golden hair, forever be tortured by his love for something that eluded him. But Michael had caught a glimpse here and there of a woman no man would ever know or see. Michael had peered dimly into the breathless, impatient corridors of her mind. He had seen her speeding past the Jewish and Protestant and Catholic cemeteries.

"Thank you very much, Maxine. Thank you a lot for the ride. I sure appreciate it."

"Well, I'm glad you liked it, Mike. So long."

"So long, Maxine."

So one evening David went up to their room in the Thornton Hotel, and he saw that Maxine had removed her brushes off the bureau, and he noticed that her slippers were gone from the wardrobe. Her dresses had vanished,

the black dress, the pale blue satin, the white evening dress that she had worn to the theater the evening before. Every trace of Maxine was gone from the room. David stood under the center light looking thin and worn. His shoes were cracked and worn through the soles, and the bottoms of his trousers were frayed. When he had first met Maxine, he was a devil of a fellow, big and strong and juicy with life; and now she had fed on him, and he was flesh and bones, his eyes were dead, and there were streaks of gray running through his black hair.

There was a note pinned to the pillow on his bed. "I lit out in the car for California. Honey, I was just tired of the life and couldn't stand it any more. We just couldn't make it together. Don't get lonesome. Maxine."

David took up the note and held it in front of his eyes. He folded it very carefully, once, and once again. Then he unfolded it and looked at it and sighed. Then he folded it again and put it away in his vest pocket. It was getting dark in the room, and the light above his head flickered and went dim. He approached Maxine's bed and lay down upon it and lay very still and groaned. Then he got up again and stood perfectly still in the center of the room and took out the note again and read it again. So there was nothing to do but go out and tramp the streets until he was tired. He went out and entered one of those restaurants where you sit on a stool at a counter and all he ordered was coffee. He walked out to his father's house on West Granite Street, but when he got to the house he walked past it. He walked all the way back to the Thornton Hotel and went up to the room. He didn't seem to have any heart for taking off his clothes. He looked at his shoes for a long time and bent over and began tugging at the laces. But he straightened up suddenly and got to his feet and walked to the window. He looked out on the street five stories down. He stood by the window for a long time as if he didn't know what to do.

He opened the window as far as it would go and lifted himself half way out of the sill. He looked ridiculous with one of his legs in the room, one hanging down the side of the building. A minute passed and his muscles were tense and his face was as pale as parchment. Then, in a half frenzy, he drew up his leg and got back into the room and stumbled into Maxine's bed, sobbing wretchedly.

THIRTEEN: SOL AND HARRY

When Sol was eighteen and Harry a year younger, they were so different in mind and in body it was difficult to understand that they were brothers. Sol was just a trifle under medium height, with heavy-set shoulders and short, sturdy legs. When he took off his clothes, you could see the muscles under his skin, patterns of strength and virility. Sol had a fair skin, golden-brown eyes, and a nose that was rather short and flat. The hair that had been golden when he was a child, had now turned dark brown. Nobody knew where Sol came from, he was so light; certainly not from Rebecca's side where all the men had been so gypsy dark; and Moses said that he could not remember anyone with brown hair in his family. Physically, Sol resembled his father; he had the same chunky shoulders and deep chest and swinging, corded arms. He could lift heavy weights on those shoulders. When new shipments of goods came to the store, Sol was the one who carried towers of boxes, mountains of sheep-lined coats, stacks of overalls. His legs were somewhat bow, and often he had the appearance of an ape with his large head and long arms. He was like a beast when he was aroused. He did not stop and resolve the reason for his anger in his large head; the anger burned itself in his flesh like a brand and he took fire at the first contact. The Singermanns felt that Sol was beneath them in intelligence. Moses called him *der grobber,* the gross one. But Rebecca said that Sol was so kind he would give away the shirt off his back. "In his heart he is the best one of all," said Rebecca.

Harry was delicately formed with small wrists and ankles, a narrow chest and a girl's waist. He had the coal-black hair

of the other Singermanns, with finely penciled long black eyebrows and wide dark brown eyes. He had the most beautiful eyes in the family, full of poetry and dreaminess and passion. His nose was long, but well-shaped, a Greek nose; and his lips were deep red and full like the petals of a red flower. He was too pretty to be really handsome, too paltry in his gestures and attitudes to be manly. His mind was sensitive, quick to receive impressions, and for a Singermann, he was studious. He could grasp mathematical knowledge with little effort, and that was not easy for the others. He could build up structures of ideas in his head and reason things out with a cool intelligence; and he was capable of taking ideas apart in his mind and putting them together again. In school he understood chemistry and geometrical problems. Sol never made any attempts to understand these formulas, and Michael became bored and depressed with them.

The Singermanns had always been strong in their bodies with rarely a day's illness, except for Sol's diphtheria; but Harry was constantly ailing throughout his childhood. When he was ill with throat afflictions and fever, he would look out through the front window and watch the sturdy children at play. He would envy them their health, but he held their trivial games in contempt.

When Harry became adolescent, he grew stronger and was less afflicted by aches and pains. His skin was olive and clear and he held his head well and walked with grace. And because he was so delicate and finely wrought, he was sheltered by the others and coddled. He could solve problems beyond the others' comprehension; and the Singermanns admired his quickness, saying, "That Harry is so smart. Wise talk comes out of him and his eyes are full of meaning." He was left much to himself, and no one knew what was going on inside him.

Harry looked with distaste upon Joseph's worship of

merchandise. He was contemptuous of David's love for Maxine. He shrank from his father's brusque maleness and virility. The rawness of Silver Bow was not a proper background for him and threw him in upon himself. He played the violin for hours at a time and wept over the sweet and deep melodies he played. He made up dramas in his mind and acted them out using collar buttons and marbles and rings for actors. He accompanied himself on journeys and no one was there to see what he saw, not even Louis who was also a dreamer. He would stand before a mirror and see how large his eyes were and how soft and red his lips. When he walked the streets, he wanted others to observe how good-looking he was. One day his father presented him with a silk dressing gown, and Harry locked the door of his room and surveyed himself in the mirror and drew the robe close about his skin. He liked its softness, its color. He took the violin case from the top of the clothes cupboard, and played soft melodies. He watched himself as he played and saw his girlish, delicate wrists, his long slender fingers plucking music from the instrument, gay and fast, sad and slow.

Sol had always admired prizefighters. He thought that Jim Jeffries, Joe Gans, and Battling Nelson were the greatest men in America. Whenever he saw a prizefighter's picture in a newspaper or magazine, he clipped it and pasted it on the wall of his bedroom. He had pictures of Papke, Herrera, Jimmy Britt, Jim Corbett, Abe Attell, Stanley Ketchel, and many others. Lithe, half-naked men fought one another all over the walls of Sol's bedroom, and the red wall paper seemed to be bleeding with their gore. The walls shouted combat and action; you heard the thud of boxing gloves striking on bare skin, the peal of the gong beginning and ending each round. You saw a prizering set up in the center of a great open space. The ring was harsh, blatant in its out-

lines, huge bulbs of white light straining down upon it. Dark, vehement rows of men sat near the ring and all about. Close to the light you could see their avid, lusting faces. Farther away they merged into an indistinct mass.

You came into Harry's room and you smelled a stale odor of incense; and on the window-sill were two tall brass candlesticks with orange-colored candles fitted into them. On the wall was a likeness of Beethoven pondering the overtones of a symphony. Harry used talcum powder and he had secretly purchased a lipstick. After he had locked his door at night, he sometimes applied the rouge to his lips and the powder to his cheeks. Timidly, he looked at himself in the mirror and saw how beautiful he could make himself. Yet, sometimes, when Harry was discussing a problem in trigonometry with one of his High School teachers, he looked as if he could never descend to such trivialities as powder and lipstick. He was ashamed of himself at times, and for days he would not touch the powder or lipstick. And then, his weakness would overcome him and he would succumb to his own allurement. Harry began to see himself as two separate persons. He saw himself as a superior youth who could make successful experiments in the chemical laboratory, who could read William James, a man not even his English teacher understood. And then he would slip away from science and psychology and blacken his eyebrows, rouge his lips, and drug himself into believing that he was a decadent. He tried to have intimate relations with the girls Down the Line, but for some reason they repelled him. He could not reason out that particular problem. He began to think himself all wrong and very strange.

I

Sol delivered a package to the head of the Silver Bow Physical Training School one day. The head's name was Pat O'Leary, a great giant of an Irishman with black hair and rosy cheeks. The Silver Bow Physical Training School was

nothing but a prizefighters' stable, and O'Leary had a number of young men in training. He had them skipping rope, tossing the medicine ball, and shadow boxing. Sol came in and smelled flesh and leather and sweat, and his blood boiled in him. This was something like it. O'Leary came forward and took the package and paid Sol for a pair of shoes he had purchased at the store. But Sol did not leave immediately. He watched the young men in their running drawers, boxing, stooping down from an upright position to touch their toes, making a blur of the punching bag. Rat-a-tat-tat-tat-tat-tat-tat-rat-a-tat-tat-tat-tat went the bag and looked a smudge in the power of clever hands that smote it relentlessly. O'Leary passed from one pupil to another, passing out obscene wisdom. He supervised two boxers trying to lay each other out. "Hey, Luke," he said to one of them, "you're leaving yourself as wide open as a floozie. Cover up, cover up. I see where you want to get butchered. That ain't no way, laying yourself wide open like that. Watch me." So O'Leary put on the gloves, and he was over forty, but he made his opponent look helpless and weak. "It's the defense that makes a fighter," he said. "Nearly anybody can hit, but when you got a defense, you're good. What I mean. Good."

Sol could not tear himself away from the gymnasium. His eyes swallowed everything that was going on. He stopped outside the ropes of a ring that had been set up in the middle of the floor, and watched two boxers trying to hit one another. Sol imagined that he was one of the boxers. He saw where he could rip open one of the men with a succession of uppercuts to the jaw. He jigged on the sawdust floor and swung his arms up and down. He doubled up his fists until his nails cut into the flesh of his palms. He didn't think much of the boxers. He felt that he could step inside the ring and knock either one of them out. He came up close against the ropes and felt them rough against his skin, the

rough, bristling strands of the ropes. No feminine hands had ever touched these ropes, no girlish chatter had ever disturbed the routine of this thrusting masculinity. The sweat was a man's sweat, the voices were deep down in masculine chests, the curses owned a healthy, downright obscenity. Sol saw himself stripped of his clothes and standing in the center of a ring while white-hot arc lights burned down upon him. He saw himself dancing around the ring, and the other guy was trying to hit him. But I'm too clever. Look at the way I dance in and out of danger. I'm a Gentleman Jim, so graceful, so light on my feet, but there's poison in my punch. Sol breathed quickly and hard and saw himself drawing blood. Some day there would be blood on the leather of his gloves, a part of another man upon himself, another man he was killing.

"Don't hang on those ropes," O'Leary ordered him. "Get away from the ropes. Come on. Don't loiter. Don't loiter around here, for Chris' sake."

"Say," asked Sol, "how much does it cost to come here? Say, would you take me? I strip at a hundred seventy. I can punch, what I mean. Would you take me on, O'Leary? I want to get in this game."

O'Leary looked Sol up and down. O'Leary's eyes were taking Sol in and digesting Sol and ruminating on Sol. He saw Sol's shoulders, his chest, his hips, his calves. He saw Sol's large beefy hands and the bones of Sol's knuckles.

"So you think you can fight?" asked O'Leary. "Well, that ain't so unnatural. S'pose you strip an' put on the gloves. You don't look half bad. Hey, Dennis! Dennis, take this kid on the scales an' give him a pair o' drawers."

Dennis was that part of a man left over after years of fighting. His nose had been hammered into his flesh until only the lower nostrils were visible. His ears were battered and twisted, his eyes were slits, and a scar at one side of his mouth gave him the expression of a clown suffering inter-

minable horror. Once Dennis had been young and fine of feature, and he had gone into the ring, but he never got anywhere. And now he was slow and heavy; but he trembled at the peal of a bell.

When Sol had removed his clothes, Dennis led him to the scales and Sol stepped on them. Dennis patted and kneaded Sol's flesh. His hands felt all over Sol's body, and he took hold of Sol's legs and shook them. "You got a good build," said Dennis. His hands would not leave Sol alone. They were importune, thrusting, examining hands. "You're a Jew, ain't ye?" asked Dennis.

"Yaa."

"You ought to make a good fighter, 'cause you got a grudge against the world. These Jews make good fighters if they don't begin eatin' ham."

Dennis led Sol back to O'Leary and the trainer's eyes once more measured Sol up and down. His eyes seemed to be penetrating into Sol's chest, into his heart. "Ever fought before?" asked O'Leary.

"Not scientific," said Sol. "But I can punch. I know I can hit."

"Can you take it?" asked O'Leary.

"Oh, sure," said Sol. "I ain't bothered a-tall."

"You're a little flabby," was O'Leary's thoughtful comment. "You look more like a truckman as a fighter. You got to take some o' that off. You're too beefy. Let me see you run."

Sol started running around the gymnasium. He ran around once, but O'Leary motioned him on, and he ran around again and yet again. His heart was pounding against his ribs, and dribbles of sweat were forming under his arms and running down his sides and back. His breathing was harsh and uneven and he felt as though his lungs were being torn to pieces.

"Your wind is bad," concluded O'Leary. "Hey, Den-

nis, put the kid under the shower an' give him his clothes."

Sol didn't know whether he had satisfied O'Leary or not. He followed Dennis to the shower and stood under the downpour of lukewarm, then cold water. The long lines of water bore down on his thick brown hair, his heavy apelike shoulders, his shanks. Water dripped down from his nose onto his hairy chest. Dennis rubbed him down until his skin was rosy and excited with health. Sol laughed he felt so good, so strong and so fresh. When he put on his clothes again, he felt as if he had never worn them before. There had been a different person in these clothes, a person all compressed and heavy and dense to sensations.

Sol walked out into the gymnasium and stood before O'Leary. But the trainer was busy supervising a young Greek with a white statue of a body and the profile of a god. Sol watched O'Leary and the Greek and he felt that he ought not to be here with two such men, one so wise in fighting experience, the other so fine and straight in his body. He ought to be back in the store carrying in towers of boxes, bales of overalls, stacks of heavy corduroy pants. O'Leary had forgotten Sol. He had forgotten that he had told Sol to take off his clothes, to get on the scales, run around the gymnasium, get under the shower. He was thinking only of the young Greek whose fine torso was gleaming and shimmering as he struck the punching bag, rat-a-tat-tat-tat-tat-rat-a-tat-tat-tat-tat, the bag dissolving into a blur, a dark, quivering momentum that had no outlines, no serene reality.

O'Leary's broad back was as a wall that seemed to be shutting Sol away from his ambition, his delight of delights. O'Leary's back was impregnable, forbidding, shutting out light, the harsh, brutal illumination of the white arcs that burned holes into the prizering. Sol looked at O'Leary's back and felt weak and impotent. What ever made him

think that he could be a fighter? How had he ever come to include himself in the ranks with Jim Jeffries, Stanley Ketchel, Billy Papke?

O'Leary turned about and looked at Sol, but did not see him. He was thinking about the Greek, the ribs of the Greek, lithe, smooth ribs that slid and melted under the silk of the Greek's white skin.

"When do you want me to come back?" asked Sol. "Any time suits me."

"What? What did you say?" asked O'Leary looking at Sol, but not seeing him. "Hey, Dennis! Don't forget that tape I ordered. Get it on your way home."

"I could come back any time," said Sol. "It don't make no difference to me."

Dennis came up drawing on his coat. "I'll get the tape, Dan. All right. I'll get it on my way home."

"Don't forget," said O'Leary.

"My wind is bound to improve," whispered Sol. "I know my wind ain't so good, but I don't smoke, and it's bound to improve."

O'Leary rediscovered Sol. He gathered Sol up into his eyes, Sol's head, his neck, chest, legs, ankles. "Oh, it's you," said O'Leary. "Did you get your shower?"

"It was fine," laughed Sol. "I feel great. Gee! There's nothin' like a shower to put life into a man."

"I usually charge five dollars a lesson," said O'Leary.

Some people hardly think of five dollars. They reach into their pockets and draw out a roll of bills. One bill tight on another, a thick wad of bills held together by a rubber band. Sol had seen men like that in the store. How much is it? They would ask. They would remove the wad of bills from their pocket and count out five ones and then snap the rubber band back on the wad. Or a five-dollar gold piece was a little thing, hardly bigger than a dime, and you could lose it just as easy. A five-dollar gold piece

could slip through a hole in your pocket and fall to the sidewalk, and you might not hear it. It was very rare you had a five-dollar gold piece in your pocket. Saturday night, when you were paid, you had one, but it had to last out the week, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday.

"That's a lot of money," said Sol to O'Leary.

"That's my usual price," explained O'Leary, "but I'll knock off a dollar an' take a chance on you. You may be a piece of cheese, an' then again you may have somethin'. Today's Tuesday. Come around on Friday an' I'll try you out with the gloves. Hell, how do I know? You may be one piece of ripe cheese."

"Say, thanks, Mr. O'Leary. I can fight all right. I promise you I'll make good. About my wind, it ain't so good now——"

"Talkin' won't improve your wind any. How do I know? You may be a piece of limburger."

"Ha!" laughed Sol. "That's a good one. Limburger! Christ!"

"Well, come back on Friday. Same time. I'll put the gloves on you."

"Sure, I will, Mr. O'Leary. But I ain't no piece of cheese. You're damn right I ain't."

"Get the hell out o' here. But come back on Friday."

"I'll be here. I'll be right here."

After dinner, Sol invited Harry into his room, and said, "Now you be my opponent. I'll show you how to box. Put up your arms. Don't be afraid. I won't hurt you."

"Listen, I don't want to fight," said Harry. "Leave me alone, you big baboon. Let me out of here."

"Come on. Put up your guard," urged Sol. I'm the champion of the world, and Harry is a young feller trying to make a name for himself, thought Sol. He started to box,

shooting out his left, and then crossing with his right, unexpectedly, catching Harry on the mouth. Harry shrank from the blows and covered his head, awkwardly, with his arms. "Take your hands off me, you bow-legged stiff!" called Harry. He ran out of the room and out of the house, and he could hear Sol laughing scornfully. "He's afraid! Hey, Harry! Come back here, nice little girl, an' lemme make a man out of you!"

That rough baboon, thought Harry. All he thinks about is fighting and being rough. He hasn't got an idea in his head. No wonder he had to quit school, always behind in his studies. Harry wandered down the street without his hat, the wind blowing his dark hair back from his forehead. He felt a sudden deep loneliness, a desire to talk with someone who would caress him with kindly words. An extraordinarily immense sun weighed down the horizon, and all the sloping streets of Silver Bow were tinted copper. There was such a beauty about these Montana twilights of late summer, and such a sadness in the air. Could you lock yourself up in your room and read poetry on an evening like this? You would be losing the copper sun, you would be missing the long wistful fingers of the wind through your hair.

That afternoon, the history teacher in the High School, Mr. Jordan, had stroked Harry's black hair with his fingers. It was immediately after class when the other pupils had left the room. Harry had collected his books and gone to the door when Mr. Jordan stopped him.

"You're my prize pupil," said Jordan. "Are you thinking of going to college after you graduate?"

"I'd like to," said Harry. "But my father will probably want me to go to work in the store."

Jordan had placed an arm about Harry and was holding him tightly. "You must come and see me sometime," said the teacher. "I live a lonely bachelor's life. I have some

interesting books on the ancient Greeks. You look like a young Greek, Singermann. Your hair and your eyes—you're like a Greek statue."

Harry had blushed red, and he had felt the blush all over his face and body. He was pleased that someone thought him above other people, above in a special kind of way. For a moment, Mr. Jordan's arm had tightened about his waist, and then another teacher came down the hall and Mr. Jordan let his arm drop quickly, as if it had been burned. But when they were alone again, Mr. Jordan raised his hand and drew his fingers through the boy's hair, murmuring, "You're a very handsome lad."

In that moment, Harry had seen Mr. Jordan's hands and fingers. They were long, drooping hands, weeping hands that had a sadness in them and a longing. Harry wondered about Mr. Jordan. He looked into the teacher's face and he saw how the eyes had a peculiar brilliance in them. It was as though Mr. Jordan's eyes were thieves, snatching all they looked upon. Mr. Jordan's eyes were intoxicated with what they saw and they seemed to want more. They wanted Harry's eyes and lips and hair and his whole body. Harry thought about this and wondered why Mr. Jordan should look at him that way. And yet he was pleased, too, for he knew that the teacher thought him a special kind of person, different from the other students in the class, a person to be taken close and caressed.

Mr. Jordan was different from Harry's brothers. He was a slight, fair man with mustard-colored hair and hazel eyes. He had little delicacies about himself, about his speech and his walk and his gestures. He spoke softly and dreamily; sometimes it seemed as though he had fallen asleep in the midst of a phrase. His words were colored barges floating out to sea. He told his class that he had been to Greece, to the islands there, and he had seen old theaters of Greece where plays had been performed thousands of years ago.

Harry was fascinated by Mr. Jordan. He was unused to delicacy in men. His own father was so rough and crude and never so much as patted him kindly. Harry had never kissed his father. Not one of his brothers had ever touched him in a loving way. Joseph was too busy and had married when Harry was quite young. Louis was kind and loving, inside; but when it came to a show of affection like petting, Louis couldn't do it. David would have scorned such a demonstration between brothers, and Sol's touch was a blow. Harry had missed affection of this sort. His body had always yearned for kindness and tenderness, but there had been no one to be kind. So that when Mr. Jordan put his arm about him, Harry was numbed into a kind of delicious astonishment. And Jordan was a highly intelligent man, not just a duffer, a heavy working man. He knew about places far away, the orange trees in the Balearic Islands and the old theaters of Greece, the lime-scented slopes of Greece. So Harry thought about these things minutely. He thought about them with a confused, embarrassed pleasure when Mr. Jordan's arm was about him, and he thought about them, a series of sweet sensations, as he walked along the copper-tinted streets of Silver Bow.

Friday evening, Sol went to Dan O'Leary's gymnasium, and at first Dan did not remember him. Sol had to remind him that he had been there Tuesday. "And you told me to come back. You said that I might make a fighter, and you promised to put the gloves on me."

"Well, get into your trunks, then," ordered O'Leary. "I'll have you box a couple of rounds with Frank Doyle. Frank's your weight and about your height."

Sol hurried into one of the alcoves curtained off from the gymnasium and took off his clothes and got into a pair of white trunks. The world had never revolved so swiftly for Sol Singermann. Days and days he had been thinking of Jim

Jeffries, Bob Fitzsimmons, Joe Gans, Battling Nelson, and he knew their crouches, their styles. He knew them by heart, the ways they had in the ring, weaving and feinting. Bob Fitzsimmons was a tall Cornishman with freckles all over him, and you'd never think that his spindly legs could carry such shoulders, such hands that crashed through Gentleman Jim. Abe Attell was a foxy Jew, clever, clever as hell, the little kike. And it was hard to hit him because where was he when you let go? John L. Sullivan was the pride of Boston, but that was a long time ago, before our time. There were stories of John L. Sullivan, the Boston strong boy, in the newspapers. There were fights in those days, when John L. Sullivan fought Jake Kilrain.

Sol stepped into the ring between the ropes and sat down in one corner. And Frank Doyle stepped into the ring, crossed himself, and sat down in the opposite corner. "Just a little sparring match," said O'Leary moving towards the center of the ring. "I want to kind of get a line on you two. Take it easy as easy. All right there. The Kosher Tornado and the Irish Wildcat."

O'Leary stepped aside and Sol and Frank Doyle came up to one another. They shook hands, and then Doyle stepped back quickly and let fly a bewildering right that caught Sol on the jaw. "Pretty kiss, pretty kiss," murmured O'Leary. Sol followed up his man and began pegging away and tried to get through Doyle's defense. Doyle had surrounded himself with moats and walls and battlements. He was safe and sound in the very center of a walled city, and Sol attempted to climb over and get at him. Doyle would not allow any one like this amateur to scale his walls. He led with his right, then crossed with his left, as though it were a snake being quickly released from a box. Out the snake would come and bite and swiftly withdraw into its box. Sol was vexed with a sharp, tenacious anger. He wanted to tear into Doyle and beat Doyle to a pulp, but the Irish boy stepped

aside and uncovered his box of snakes that bit Sol on the jaw, the mouth, the nose. Doyle was superior, and Sol hated him for it. Doyle was a sleek, slippery fellow whose lips were curled slightly in contempt, and Sol wanted to take those lips and tear them into red ribbons. He wanted to split Doyle's nose wide open to the bone, that curt, contemptuous nose. Sol felt his ribs drawing in on his lungs as if they would crush him, force out his life, inch by inch. His legs did not feel a part of him, but were weights that he had to drag after him wherever he moved. And now Doyle had wedged him into a corner and was lashing out at him, left-right, left-right, left-right, until the blood streamed down Sol's chin and he could taste its sticky warmth on the end of his tongue. At that moment, O'Leary stepped between them. "All right. Let's see your face, Singermann. Now you can say you been baptized. Yes, sir. Hey, Dennis. Got some salve handy?"

Sol stood trembling and dizzy in the center of the ring while Dennis came with the salve. He saw Frank Doyle step without the ropes, coolly, without a trace of a bruise, and Sol wanted to rush after the Irishman and beat him. He was irked by a keen anguish, a deep humiliation that was digging deep in his vitals. "That'll be all for tonight," said O'Leary. "Come back Tuesday."

"I'll do a lot better after a while," gasped Sol.

"Well, I hope so," said O'Leary and walked away. Sol went back to his dressing room to put on his clothes. Fully dressed, he passed out through the front door and saw Frank Doyle just ahead of him. Doyle in his clothes was not half the man he was with them off. With only his trunks covering him and his blue belt about his slender waist, Frank Doyle was as fine a specimen of masculinity as a man could see. If you looked at him just as a man in condition, as a fighter, he was as fine an object of flesh and bone as you would see anywhere. His slim hips, his straight, firm stom-

ach, his square-set shoulders, his fine head—he was a man of great beauty. Sol couldn't help seeing him as a rare fighting machine. He couldn't help it, and yet Frank Doyle had made scrambled eggs out of him. He had taken Sol, the cocky amateur, and made a mess of him. But with his clothes on, Doyle looked pretty much the same as other men; the beauty of his body was covered with old clothes and the collar of his coat didn't fit right.

Sol couldn't help feeling surprised that Frank Doyle should be waiting for him like this. Doyle smiled, and his face was not at all contemptuous and superior as it had been in the ring. "You put up a good fight," said Doyle. "You got a punch, what I mean."

"You're kidding me," said Sol. "Why, you had me down and out there. I was dead on my feet."

"Well, there's a lot you can learn about boxing. Christ, if I had your punch!" exclaimed Doyle in admiration. "I'd be fighting Stanley Ketchel if I had your punch."

"Aw, g'wan, you're kidding me."

"On the level. What I mean is, don't get discouraged. There's the makin's of a real top-notcher in you if you'll only learn to box. You ain't got no science, see?"

Sol began to feel a genuine liking for Frank Doyle. In the gymnasium, he had felt that Doyle was laughing at him, but now he saw that Doyle was a real guy and not just a machine. Doyle's fighting face told everybody to go to hell, but Doyle's street face had a sweetness about it, a meek charm that was hard to resist. "How far you going?" he asked Sol.

"Well, I was going home."

"Why don't you drop in at St. Patrick's with me?" asked Frank Doyle.

"You don't mean St. Patrick's Catholic church? Why, I never been inside there. My father don't let me go inside Christian churches."

"Is it a sin for a Jew to go in a Christian church?"

"Not that I know of," said Sol. "Only it would be funny for me to go in a Christian church when I never was in one."

"Well, then I'll be on my way."

"Oh, say, Doyle. I didn't mean to be sore about it. I'll go in with you. What you goin' to do?"

"Well, it's this way," explained Doyle. "I promised Father Mulcahy I'd say a prayer every time I stepped out of a prize-ring. I was just a lad when I made this promise. Just before I step into a ring, I say a prayer, an' when I step out of one I say a prayer."

"I'm learning things," said Sol. "Is it because you're afraid you'll be killed that you pray?"

"I'm in a fight to win, ain't I? And to win, I got to beat up the other lad. It ain't Christian to hit a man smack on the nose like that. It ain't accordin' to the teachin's of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ."

"Well, don't say a prayer for me," said Sol. "I don't believe in Jesus Christ."

"He was a Jew," Doyle pointed out.

"He stole a piece of holy parchment out of one of the synagogues," Sol said. "A piece of parchment that had been handed down from Moses. And Jesus Christ split open the palm of his hand and stuck the piece of parchment inside and sewed it up. And with that piece of parchment inside his palm, Jesus Christ went out and done his miracles. But anybody could have done miracles with that piece of parchment 'cause it was handed down from Moses. I could do miracles if I had that piece of parchment sewed inside my palm."

"Now, I'll tell one," said Frank Doyle.

"It's the truth. My mother told me that, and my mother heard it from one of her people who was a rabbi in Roumania."

"Sh! Don't blaspheme the name of the Holy Lord," whispered Frank Doyle.

They came to St. Patrick's and ascended the hill of steps that led to the front doors. Sol was a bit frightened as he entered, but once within, he was soothed by the dimness, the high colored windows, and the pervading fragrance of incense. He accompanied Frank to one of the alcoves. There was a statue of Mary there with the Holy Child in her arms. Frank crossed himself piously and then knelt on the cold stone floor on both knees. He began whispering to himself, and Sol stood near by and watched Frank Doyle and then looked at the statue of Mary. What was Frank Doyle whispering there, in the dimness, under the trembling flames of the candles? Sol remembered Frank Doyle in the ring. He remembered the delicacy and swiftness of Frank's footwork, the arms shooting out like clever snakes, the superior, contemptuous expression. He remembered how Frank Doyle had worked him into a corner and held him imprisoned in a blind net of steady and painful rights and lefts. And now the Irishman was so humble, so quiet and worshipful here, kneeling on the cold floor, under the rose and gold chutes of light that streamed in through the tall windows.

Frank Doyle rose to his feet and when he passed the crucified Christ, genuflected. Then he took Sol's arm and the two boys passed out of the church into the harsh, rugged light of the street. "One thing I noticed about you," said Doyle. "You rush in without studyin' the other fellow's attack. Now that's the way a amachure fights. You'll rush in some day and get your block knocked off."

"That's right," admitted Sol. "You're right. I s'pose you were saying a prayer for me in that church? I s'pose you said you was sorry for makin' my nose bleed?"

"I was sayin' that. An' I was sayin' that Jesus be good to all His children, even the Jews."

"Well, that was damn nice o' you, Frank."

"An' I was askin' of Him to make you a good scientific boxer so's you wouldn't rush in where the angels they fear to tread."

"Aw, come off. Honest?"

"Say, I don't lie about my prayers, you heathen Jew."

"Well, that's certainly damn white o' you, Frank. Only what good will it do me? I ain't a Cath'lic. The only One who'll look after me is th' God o' the Jews."

"Jesus Christ will look after you."

"Like hell, He will. Well anyway, thanks for the good word. Will I see you Tuesday, Frank?"

"You bet."

"So long, Religious."

"So long, you heathen."

Mr. Jordan, the history teacher, lived in one of the flats of a two-family house on West Silver Street. That same evening when Sol was with Frank Doyle, Harry went to call at Mr. Jordan's flat. He had put on his best blue serge suit and a new white shirt with a black stripe that his father had given him in the store. Moses was proud to think that one of his sons was going to call on a High School teacher. He picked out a shirt for Harry that cost twelve dollars a dozen, wholesale, and the black stripe was silk. Harry had shined his shoes until they gleamed like polished ebony, until he could see his reflection in the shining toes of his shoes. And as he walked towards Mr. Jordan's flat, he felt superior, he had the feeling that his history teacher had singled him out from all the other students. Mr. Jordan would look at him in that particular kind of way, with those brilliant, possessive eyes. Perhaps the history teacher would even put his arm around him, and run his long, drooping fingers through his black hair.

There was another barbaric sunset this evening. When the

sun left these mountains, this sky, did it sink away to China, the Philippines? Or did it go to Majorca, the buttes of Spain, or perhaps the isles of Greece, the floating emeralds of the isles of Greece? Harry felt his loneliness as a very intimate thing. He felt his aloneness as something deep within him, that he alone possessed, or perhaps only himself and Mr. Jordan. His loneliness knew beauty, knew about the sun and where it had gone. His loneliness knew of Mr. Jordan waiting for him, Mr. Jordan with his mustard-colored hair, his hazel eyes, his fingers that dripped a prayerful solicitude. Harry wished that he had a brother like Mr. Jordan to talk with about ancient things and sights and sounds beyond the horizon. He wished that Mr. Jordan had been his father. Harry could see himself with Mr. Jordan if the history teacher were his father. In the evening, they would sit near one another in a room whose walls were lined with books. Rooms like that are called studies. Shelves would be built into the walls and reach to the ceiling, and each shelf would be alluring with books. Books of far-off places, of times that were before the modern world. Aristotle and Socrates, Homer and Virgil. Antony and Cleopatra. I am dying, Egypt, dying! There was a Garden of Aphrodite. Strong, fine men who wandered into the green groves of the Garden of Aphrodite. When the moon drifts like an amber pendant through the evening sky, there are low voices, love voices in the groves of Greece, in the Garden of Aphrodite. The dim, fragrant interludes of the old years. There had been a garden in old Greece and men went there to love and be loved. Not like Bernard Shaw, the age of Reason, mathematics. A man and woman lie together in ecstasy. There is no psychology in ecstasy. But pure mathematics can very often be beautiful to me. In the evening, Mr. Jordan would sit close to Harry; he would be close enough to whisper, to pass his long, clinging fingers through the boy's black hair.

Harry rang the bell to Mr. Jordan's flat, and the teacher came to the door himself. He stood there in the shadow of the opened door, and he was lithe, as though ready to spring upon his pupil, and his eyes were abnormally bright. He took Harry's hand and drew the boy into the hallway. "That lamp hanging from the ceiling," said Mr. Jordan, and pointed to the lamp. "I bought it one day in Florence. It's an old, old lamp that once made a light in some old Florentine house. I was walking along a street in Florence when I saw the lamp in an old antique shop. . . . Florence to Silver Bow, Montana. Come in, Harry. Make yourself comfortable."

Harry followed his teacher into a room that was small but filled with lovely things. The head of a boy, a white marble head of a Greek boy with long eyes, full lips, rhapsodical hair. That white hand. Just a single hand with fine, tapering fingers. On the wall was Mona Lisa. "You should see it in the Louvre. When you are older, you must go abroad and tramp through the art galleries," said Mr. Jordan. "You must go to the Louvre, and the Prado in Madrid. There's a house in Toledo where El Greco lived. The Tate Gallery in London. . . . You would like London, Harry. You would walk along the Embankment at night and see the bridges, impalpable, swooning into the Thames."

"Yes, sir. The way you explain all these things . . . I would like them . . . very much."

"Sit down in this chair," said Mr. Jordan, and Harry sank into a soft, heavy armchair that had the design of some green flower upon its rough cloth. For a moment, the teacher hung over the chair and stood like that without saying a word. Then he withdrew to one of the rear rooms and came back in a long silk dressing gown. Black silk with a scarlet collar and cuffs. He seated himself in a chair very close to his visitor and placed a cool hand on the boy's forehead. "Relax," he whispered. "Close your eyes. Try and think you

are not in Silver Bow. You are in an old town in Europe. Close your eyes and relax."

Harry had never passed under such a spell of slow, somnolent inertia. Every movement, every touch of Mr. Jordan was as soft and soothing as silk, and there was a certain contemplative quality in his affection. Harry was awake in a sleep. He lay back in the armchair and felt around in his waking sleep and touched his dreams. He whispered to his soft, sequestered dreams and ran his fingers through his dreams. Life passed by with a soft, undisturbing tread. Life swished her long train of dreams. Harry had lived so many days, this year and last year and all the years before; but only now was he tasting life's flavor. He had swallowed his days whole without tasting their many moments, and now he was passing his tongue over each moment, rolling each moment over and over on his tongue until life had melted in his mouth. He held each moment before his eyes and saw all the gems of the earth and the sea, a gorgeous conflagration of colors galore. If he had his violin now he would play, but not a familiar tune. He would create the music out of the new moments, the stream of jewels, gems of the earth, diamonds, sapphires, rubies, emeralds. Pearls of the sea.

Harry opened his eyes and blinked. "Does the light hurt your eyes?" asked Mr. Jordan. "I'll turn it off." The room was dim now and so quiet, Harry could hear the first drops of rain against the windows. He began to feel rather uncomfortable, but he could not understand why. He wished that Mr. Jordan would not look at him so. He felt that he must say something, so that Mr. Jordan would look away. "Yesterday after class, you told me you'd been in Spain," said Harry. "What is Spain like? I'd like to go there sometime. And did you hear the nightingales in the Alhambra?"

Mr. Jordan reached for a book and began to read. *You never know the heart of Spain. You travel from the border to the farthermost point at Cadiz, and you never know the*

heart of Spain. In Barcelona I lived in a small hotel in a narrow street where hung great green lamps, and I passed into the crowds, peering into the faces of those who passed me by. There were tall, lean men with dark, cruel faces and old beggars most hideously deformed and rank to the touch. There were squat, massive women, thick with food; there were noisy, railing children with black eyes and crazy mouths. The lovely Spanish women with their tantalizing hips were not in the street, but sat behind shuttered windows, their heavy black hair moist with the intense heat, their ivory complexions drawn and wistful with the stark, screaming heat. In Sevilla, I stood beneath the tower of the Giralda and six hundred sun-burned years lay about my shadow. And I did not know what was in the heart of Spain. I did not know when I climbed a hill of olive trees that led away from Cordova what lay in the heart of Spain.

Mr. Jordan read in a slow, hazy voice, and his words were like those slow-paced peasants of Spain who walk for miles down the country roads to the nearest village to barter their produce and kneel in the cathedral. His words were a group of brightly clad peasants in high black hats with red sashes about their waists, driving their mules into Valencia, Granada, Sevilla. His words were like those long, sorrowful songs the Spanish soldiers sing on their way to a dusty African oblivion. There were overtones to Mr. Jordan's words, spires of pleasure and desire. When he had finished reading, he put the book aside and Harry saw the author's name, Ferdinand Marcoyez. Where had Mr. Jordan found that strange book with its multicolored, mystic pictures? The strangeness of what Mr. Jordan had read was in the man himself, a riddle too deep to explore. The strangeness was heavy in the room; but outdoors the rain was falling and the wind and air was Silver Bow.

"I'll have to be going home," said Harry.

The sound and meaning of Harry's words seemed to dis-

please the history teacher. A poignant regret ran along his features, along the length of his body, sharpening and whipping his desire. He leaned over and touched Harry's hand. "Oh, I wouldn't let you go out in this heavy rain," he murmured. "You'd be sure to catch a dreadful cold. And besides, there's no hurry. It's only ten o'clock. And tomorrow's Saturday. How do you like my Greek boy there on the pedestal? Hasn't he a beautiful head?"

"I thought it was a girl," said Harry. "It's like the head of a girl."

"No girl could be that beautiful," answered the teacher, something hurt in the tones of his voice. "Greek art was chiefly concerned with the beauty of the male body. And quite properly, I think."

The faint beginnings of comprehension stirred in Harry's mind. A series of curious pictures passed rapidly before him, pictures somehow distorted and shameful. He was lulled and drawn by Mr. Jordan's words, and in his realization of the teacher's peculiar weakness, began to feel the proportions of his own. The weakness had been there all the time; the weakness had been there when Mr. Jordan had put his arm about him in the schoolroom and when Mr. Jordan's fingers had passed through his hair. They had been pleasant sensations of defeat. Now he felt these sensations again, only magnified tenfold, magnified until his body seemed impotent to move the fraction of an inch. He felt as though he were drowning in heavy, sweet waters, drugging to the senses, waters that seeped into the inner recesses of his brain and made powerless his ordinarily active thoughts. He felt curiously weak in Mr. Jordan's presence and he was enjoying his powerlessness. He was feeling strength in the history teacher's body; he could feel the warmth of Mr. Jordan and the fine, deliberate pleasures of Mr. Jordan's arms and hands and fingers. And he realized that these sensations had been with him for a long time, only he had never seen them clear,

he had never felt their outlines, viewed their dark, pernicious colors. He knew now what Mr. Jordan saw in him, just as he knew what he desired in Mr. Jordan. The beginnings of the comprehension had formed a dreadful foundation in his mind that weighed his body down. The rain fell heavily outdoors, and for some minutes, Harry sank into a coma of desire for Mr. Jordan's body. But there were lines of sharp, jagged lights outlining this desire, and Harry was pricked and quickened by these lights. They were lights of thought, of reason. He was reasoning out the desire awakened in him by Mr. Jordan. He was drawing the desire out and examining it; and the more plainly he saw his desire, the less it weighed him down. He jerked himself out of his chair. "I really have to be going," he said.

Mr. Jordan seemed to fall away into an incompleteness. His mustard-colored hair had lost its luster, and a quick nervousness had seized his body all along his muscles. He passed his teeth over his lower lip as though he had lost control of his reactions. "I'm sorry, Harry," he mumbled. "I thought that we might have a long talk together."

"Thank you very much," said the boy. "But it looks like the rain will last all night."

"You could stay here," said Mr. Jordan.

Harry felt the teacher's hands on his shoulders, and for a moment he wilted under the caress. Once more he was struggling under the sweet, enervating flood of his desires. But the more that body sagged, the more his mind freed itself and pricked him with intellectual reproaches. It was not the first time Harry had felt these two antagonistic forces at war within him. Mr. Jordan's arms called to him with an insistence that paralyzed his muscles; but with his mind, Harry flung Mr. Jordan aside.

"I'll come back some other time," was the only thing he could think of saying.

"Well, you're a foolish boy to go out in this storm when

it would be no trouble for me to put you up for the night."

"I hardly know you," said Harry turning about.

"I thought you knew me rather well," said the teacher petulantly.

All of a sudden, Harry saw before him a pitiable, weak man, a man who chattered like a weak woman, driven by inexplicable sensations. He saw now that all of Mr. Jordan's fine ideas, perceptions, and imaginative fancies were in the grip of a relentless, tragic, and somehow ludicrous desire. Before he had entered Mr. Jordan's house, Harry had not known this desire as an objective thing. Now he saw it plainly in the teacher's too brilliant eyes, the quivering mouth, the unreasoning petulance of the man's words. He is not free, thought Harry. He has a head packed with fine thoughts, fine words; he has traveled over the world and seen many beautiful things, but he is not free. He forgets that he is not free for hours at a time, and then he remembers, and he is like a sick man. He thinks that I am sorry for him; he does not know that I am sorry for myself, too. For what is in him is also in me. The same poison is in me, but I am young and I can fight it; and he is old and it is too late. I didn't know these things until a few minutes ago. Maybe I would never have known if I hadn't come here tonight. Now I know what is the matter with me, and I can see my way clear. Now I can fight.

"Why this sudden rush?" asked Mr. Jordan in a fit of temper. He was talking like a woman now; his face was white the way a woman's face is white when she loses control of herself. His voice was pitched high and he had fury in him. Men have anger in them, solid, substantial anger; but women are made of hurtling, indecisive furies. And Mr. Jordan was mostly a woman. The mistake was a gigantic bit of irony. But Mr. Jordan was a woman in a man's body. Harry had never been drawn sensuously to women; he was

shy in their presence; they were formed in a way strange and far off from him, and he was afraid of them. That was why he looked for love in men, and that was why the combination of man and woman in one person held a fascination over him. That was why Mr. Jordan had appealed so strongly to his senses, Mr. Jordan with his man's body and his woman's desire to love. But now that Harry saw that desire as something tangible, as something he could grasp and combat, he turned his back upon Mr. Jordan and yet felt this sorrow for doing so, this pity for all the Mr. Jordans of the world.

He left Mr. Jordan there in the hallway and ran out into the rain. He let the rain beat upon him and soak him through and through to the skin until his clothes felt uneasy and rough next him. He held his face up to the rain and let it wash him, his forehead, his eyes and mouth. He must beat this sickly sensation down; he must trample upon it. Why was he made this way, with his soft, yielding body and his penetrating mind? Why did he always feel empty before women, numb, desolate of desire? A woman was not a woman to him; she was not a man. If he had been born a woman, he would have been happy then, with his soft, yielding body and his penetrating mind.

He walked along in the rain and thought of himself and he thought of Mr. Jordan. Why had these things been twisted in him and in Mr. Jordan? What was the reason for these things, these ludicrous and tragic things? Harry saw Mr. Jordan going from school to school, hiding his weakness and yet coddling it within him. He could see Mr. Jordan fighting it off successfully for days, then giving himself up to its power, its sweet, enervating power like a drug. And always he must go about wearing a mask, lest someone find him out and laugh. Perhaps, Mr. Jordan had not thought of doing anything wrong tonight; he had been tempted, had played with a desire without realizing where

it might lead him. But there must have been other nights before this when someone had not gone out into the rain.

"People are so complicated," thought Harry. "If they were only as simple as a problem in mathematics. . . . But they're not. I can't solve them . . . or myself. . . ."

He arrived home wringing wet, and his face was flushed and burning. Rebecca could not understand why he had not borrowed an umbrella from Mr. Jordan. What kind of a man was it who sent her son out into the wet without any protection? Harry began to sneeze and Rebecca helped him off with his coat. She went into the bathroom and drew the hot water for him. He had always been her weakest son, and he was endeared to her for the many times she had saved him from serious illness and even death. As she bent over the tub, Harry felt a profound compassion for her. If she would have understood, he would have talked it over with her. But such a sickness as Mr. Jordan's would pass Rebecca Singermann's comprehension. Would Moses know about it, wondered Harry? Moses had seen much in his life, but would he understand this perverseness as a tangible series of sensations to be viewed closely, analyzed?

Harry lifted his mother away from the steaming tub. "It's all right, mama. You don't have to bother about me. How do you ever expect me to get in the tub with you standing around here all the time?"

"Out in such a rain he walks," muttered Rebecca. "A rain maybe he should catch pneumonia. Quick, take off your clothes and get in the bathtub. I will put a hot-water bottle in your bed."

Harry lay in the steaming tub and thought, could he talk to Louis about it? Only Louis would understand what it was all about. But if he talked to Louis, there would be an embarrassment obtruding itself between him and his older brother. They would always know about it and would suffer for their knowledge. No, he would not talk to anyone. The

best he could do was reason it out as he reasoned out a game of chess, a problem in geometry. There was a lot of talking going on in the world, reflected Harry as he lay back in the tub and stared at the ceiling. Talking had brought out many new designs in the vast pattern of life. These designs had always been there, but they had been hidden by a veil of ignorance, and no one had bothered about them. Designs, designs, designs, ran through Harry's fevered mind, for he knew that he had developed a fever from walking so many blocks in the cold rain. Designs of death, infidelity were in the large pattern, and poetry and music and a longing for the unattainable. Ambition, lust, priggishness, physical strength, sportsmanship, religion, atheism, agnosticism, paganism, passion for women, passion for men. Designs, designs, designs in the pattern of life. Studiousness, laziness, vanity, and the sun stealing away beyond the horizon. What a complex pattern! What delicacy of design, what beautiful, what dreadful squares within squares, circles within circles! Was it possible that men looked at the pattern and saw it as very simple, very plain and harmonious? Only an old man could see life as simple in its proportions, clear and at peace. Only an old man who could no longer love with passion, whose nerves had grown dull and lost their electricity of response. Harry's mind raced fitfully on; his mind rose above his body, became a part of the steam that detached itself from the hot water. He looked into the steam and it was as though all life floated in a vapor, transparent to the eye, changing momentarily its shape and color. In the steam was the love of small, inanimate things. A book lying open on a table, the grain in a block of wood, the stiff bristles of a brush. There were all the animate things of life, running water and the smile that plays over a child's face and the flutterings of a woman's lids. Poses, pictures, the way a man ate, the way he walked, the way his lips moved in slumber. Sensations, sensations, sensations running vividly through the blood,

affecting the lungs, bringing color and pallor to the cheeks. Loneliness, aspiration, victory, defeat. The revolving wheels of a gigantic locomotive and a cockroach crawling along the floor. Fingers moving over typewriter keys, a fly buzzing against a window screen, two women kissing good-by in a railroad station. Ripples in a river changed to a silver liveliness by the moon, and the peculiar leathery smell of an Indian. All these designs were in the pattern and they were stained and colored by the blood of the world. Thousands of these designs that were visible, thousands that were hidden, all washed in the blood of the years, years since the beginning of time.

John L. Sullivan was a fighting fool, and Bob Fitzsimmons was a canny Cornishman, thought Sol as he fought three rounds with Nick Lepopulokus at Dan O'Leary's gymnasium. Men who fought were the only kind of men to pattern after. If a man could have Sullivan's stamina, Fitzsimmons' fighting sense, and Jeffries' punch, he would be sitting on top of the world. The bigger they are, the harder they fall," and Sol found an opening and drew blood from the fat, greasy nose of Nick Lepopulokus. *Singermann draws first blood.* Would the newspapers ever write that about him? Would there be pictures in the sporting pages? *Sol Singermann, the Montana mauler, the slugger of Silver Bow.* I don't care so much about the money, thought Sol and executed a perfect uppercut, so that Nick Lepopulokus was dizzy against the ropes. Dan O'Leary cried, "That's enough. Don't hit him!" Dan was smiling a vast, delighted smile. "You got something, Singermann. You're comin' along. You got the fightin' instinct for fair."

"No, I don't care so much about the money," thought Sol. "But everybody thinking that Sol Singermann is a great fighter, that's what I want. I want to be noticed when I walk down the street."

Sol was coming along. He had knocked out the best men in Silver Bow and in Montana, and O'Leary was thinking of matching him up with a fighter from New York. Sol had even beaten Frank Doyle. He had sunk the weight of his right hand into Frank's stomach, and the Irishman had parted from his proportions and poured himself out upon the mat as though he had no flesh and bones, but only blood. Sol was sorry that time he knocked Frank Doyle coo-coo. He had developed a genuine fondness for Frank Doyle, and he had been sad to think that Frank could no longer teach him things. He had carried Frank to the shower and tended Frank and helped Frank dress. And then he had accompanied Frank to St. Patrick's church where Frank had prayed before the Holy Mother and Child, under the slanting golds and blues of the stained windows.

"You're wrong to pray to God about fightin'," said Sol when he and Frank had left the church. "Fightin' ain't got nothin' to do with God. Fightin' is something in the blood, a warm feelin' in the blood like goin' after a woman when she turns up her nose at you."

"Fightin's got everything to do with God," argued Frank Doyle. "God's got everything to do with fightin'. God's got everything to do with everything."

"You mean to say God's in my corner when I'm fightin'?"

"Sure, He's everywhere. He's walkin' with ye now. He's keepin' step to your step."

"Bull. Just bull. Do you expect me to believe that bull?"

"When you knocked me out," said Frank, "I wasn't feelin' bad. I knew my strength was Jesus Christ."

"When I'm knocked out," said Sol, "will He be my strength?"

"All of your strength, forever an' ever."

"Well, I don't want His strength. I don't believe in Jesus Christ. To hell with Jesus Christ."

"You're mad," gasped Frank. "You're daft, you're loon."

"My strength is in my two fists, see? My strength is in my chest an' my legs an' my shoulders. An' when someone knocks me out, I'll be knocked out an' Jesus Christ nor nobody else, nor Jehovah, nor the Great Joss nor Mrs. Christian Science will have a thing to do with it, when I'm dead to the world, when I'm beat."

"Then, most of all ye'll turn to Him. An' He will take ye an' judge ye as ye should be judged."

"Take me, hell. Where'll He take me?"

"To Hell."

"No, thanks. I don't want to go to Hell just yet."

"Ye'll go whether ye want to or not."

"Who said so?"

"I say so. Every God-fearin' man says so."

"You're a nut, that's what. You're a pip, Frank, A plain pip. You poor hunk. What the hell, my strength is in my muscles, my back, my behind, my calves an' my feet. My strength is in my chest, my two hard fists, my knuckles. An' when I'm beat, I'll be beat. That's all. That's all there is to it."

"Then Christ have mercy on your soul," said Frank.

"Well, I ain't complainin'," said Sol.

Silver Bow had been made by the copper mines; the copper mines were Silver Bow. You smelled sulphur and smoke wherever you went; and even out in Columbia Gardens, under the trees, on the tiny lake in front of the pavilion, you were never free of the hint of copper, the golden-green glint of copper. At night it was very beautiful to watch the fires coming out of the smokestacks of the smelter on the South Side. Then it seemed that Silver Bow was a radiant horseman riding along in the saddle of the mountains, his fiery plumes waving after him. Harry saw that it was beautiful, but he knew that the beauty was composed of the blood and agony of men. From the porch of the Singermann

house, Harry could see the gallus frames of the mines rising above the roofs of houses. The tall steel towers were like bars shutting Silver Bow away from the freedom of the mountains, the fragrant pine trees, the violence, the incomparable beauty of Montana. Silver Bow was built on rich veins of copper. When a man walked the streets, Granite, Silver, Iron, Caledonia Streets, he was walking above the half-naked miners with their sweating arms and chests. The great mother earth gave her breasts to the miners, the immemorial minerals of her breasts.

First there had been the mountains. Before the time of man there had been the rocky mountains of Montana, great, crouching lions against the pale sky. Always there had been the unspeakable, unbelievable richness and color of metals in the earth, before the time of human life. Then the first pioneers had come to the Territory. They had come from the fine, cold landscapes of Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts. They had come from the monotonous plains of Kansas and Nebraska. They had left the moist meadows about the Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio Rivers and come to Montana to hunt for gold and silver and copper. There were rugged, upstanding men in those days, and they did not fear the sun, the desert, the Indians. Men from down east in Maine, men from as far south as Louisiana. They had come to Silver Bow and mined for gold and silver. In the canyons, by the streams. And they did not die of small disease, under roofs, in their beds; but there was a violence in their ends. They shook their fists against the tall skies, the leaping mountains. With their last breath and fading sight, did they remember the delicate landscapes of New England? Did they remember rivers of Louisiana, snowy woods of Maine and of Connecticut?

First had come the pioneers; but few remained now. Many were buried in the cemeteries of the Flats, and some had returned to the places from which they had emigrated,

the places where they had been born. But some had gone farther west to California, to dream away in the golden languor of California the restless days they once had known.

The ways of Big Business and huge corporations had never been dreamed of when Montana was still a territory. But gradually, companies were formed, companies were merged, the big absorbed the small and was a swaggering giant. The companies came to Silver Bow and the pioneers sold out, or were robbed or killed. The first pioneers disappeared, and their places were taken by the huge corporations who employed "muckers" who worked for three dollars and seventy-five cents a day. The muckers worked in the deep drifts of the mines, the Never Sweat, Leonard, Anaconda, Speculator mines. Irishmen, Finns, Bulgarians, Roumanians, Montenegrins, Serbs, Swedes worked in the deep drifts, the seeping, copper-damp drifts of the mines. The pioneers disappeared over the tall horizon and Romance was mechanized. So much per day, so many hours per shift, day shift, night shift, and if you don't like it, get out. There were strikes, mass-meetings, and I. W. W's appeared, and Socialists ranted and Anarchists organized. But these things had been unknown when the first pioneers came from Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Maine.

So Sol was matched with Kid Burke, a middleweight who was coming along fast. Kid Burke had knocked out a number of promising men in New York and Chicago, and he was on his way to Frisco to fight the champion himself. That morning when Kid Burke arrived in Silver Bow, the Unions had called out all the miners, and the mines were shut tight and guarded. There was a big crowd at the Great Northern Station to greet Kid Burke. The miners who were on strike, gamblers, pimps, newspaper men, all were at the station to get a peek at the famous Kid Burke. They saw a tall, upstanding young man with stiff, bristly hair and a

tigerish grace. Kid Burke had once been a hobo. He had traveled the ways of hobos, under the passenger coaches or in the freight cars. Could you see him doing that, this lithe, tigerish man with his beautiful bronzed body, his stiff, bristling hair? For a long time he had walked up and down the roads of the land, begging handouts from farmer wives, chopping wood, digging in mines, plowing the loam of casual farm lands. All the time, he had been growing stronger and easier in his strength and grace, developing the proportions of his perfect body. Until one day he had been chased off a freight car in the railroad yards at Hoboken, and had wandered into New York, to Madison Square Garden. There he had begged for a chance to show off his skill. He had begged his chance of an obscene but shrewd manager who stank of cheap perfume. This manager had looked at Kid Burke. He had seen the rails that stretched from New York to Frisco in Kid Burke, the coal mines, the farm lands, the lumber camps. The manager had seen that all tough and tigerish America was in the sinew of Kid Burke, and he had taken the Kid in hand and taught him how to box for big purses. And now, the Kid who had begged handouts from kindly Mormon wives in Utah, who had once been taken half-dead from a cold-storage freight car, was the coming colossus of America. A poem in a man. A tiger, tiger burning bright in the forests of the night.

Sol was at the station to give his opponent the once-over. "I'll lick that big bozo," he said to Harry. But the younger brother did not hear what Sol was saying. He was lost in admiration of Kid Burke. The Kid shed a radiance over the town of Silver Bow. He was greater than the mines on the hill, the smelters on the Flats. No bars of copper mines could imprison Kid Burke. His strength and power were above and beyond any environment.

"He's a wonderful looking fellow," said Harry. "It'll be a feather in your cap to whip a man like that."

"You better go to the synagogue and pray," one of the striking miners advised Sol.

"Pray, hell," said Sol. "I don't need to pray to knock that guy for a goal. When I get through with him, he's the guy that'll pray. Not me."

Harry could not help feeling that Sol was surely the most magnificent of the Singermann brothers. He was the most magnificent because he was all one person. He was all one person, master of himself and not mastered. Joseph was the slave of his business and dominated by his wife. Louis was riddled by dreams, and he could not make them come true. David was not himself, but part of Maxine and all of Maxine's life. Yet Sol, lacking sensitiveness, and the least charged by the beauty and suffering about him, was master of himself. Compact, sturdy, awful in his egoism, what would happen to Sol? Would he some day weep as David had wept? Would he run away as Louis had run away? Would his mind circle about the complex designs of life as Harry's had circled? It was good to be near the certitude, the overpowering vulgarity of Sol. Sol was not a prisoner behind the bars of copper mines. He was nearer to a man of the Kid Burke stamp; he was steel, strength, power, a stubborn young man who went his way, very truly, very sincerely.

The broad expanse of land at the foot of South Montana Street, an expanse which served as an ice rink in winter, was the scene of the fight between Kid Burke and Sol. The land would not be flooded for another month; so now they had constructed a prizering in its very center, and above the ring they had fixed huge arc lights. Surrounding the ring on all sides were freshly constructed wooden benches. The wood smelled clean and newly sawn, but there were slivers in some of the boards; and one of the strikers called out that he had caught a sliver in his leg and that it was a plot of the mining company. Nearly everything unpleasant was a

plot of the mining company's, if you were to believe the Industrial Workers of the World, the Finns' Union, and the followers of Emma Goldman. The wooden boards that had been yellow under the afternoon sun were now covered by the closely pressed forms of men. Not a mine was working, so that all the miners were free to attend the fight if they had the money to spend. There were stories of men and women up in Centerville without food, of miners who had looted a grocery store; yet in some way or other, the miners had found money to attend the prizefight. The best seats, near the ring, were five dollars; the cheapest were a dollar and a long distance off. There were a few women in the five-dollar seats, girls from the West Side who felt smart and sophisticated. One of these girls was smoking a cigarette and she held it up above her head so that everybody could see. There were quite a few remarks about this girl. Her father was a mining official who received a huge salary paid every week. The strikers who had paid a dollar for their seats said that her father was a dirty so-and-so, a company tool, and that he got his salary direct from Wall Street. But the girl went on smoking her cigarette just the same, and she had a good deal to say to the young man who was sitting beside her. His trousers were snappy collegiate, and he had a big P on his sweater. Some of the High School students in the crowd argued about the P, a few saying that it stood for Princeton, and others saying Pennsylvania. But it turned out that the young man was a student at Gonzaga.

Harry and Louis and David sat midway between the best and cheapest seats. They had paid to get in, because O'Leary had given away all his free passes to the striking miners. It would have looked bad if he had given the passes to those who could afford to pay. He would have been cursed in the Miners' Union Hall, and the I. W. W. paper would have printed a hot editorial about him.

The rows of wooden benches filled up quickly. The cheaper seats were the first occupied. Most of these men were Irish and Cousin Jacks, for the Southern Europeans did not care for prizefights. The men in the cheaper seats had brought whiskey with them, and some had come with bottles of beer. They sang songs and changed around meanings, and each song smelled bad there were so many obscene words. When the preliminaries failed to start on time, the men jeered, catcalled, stamped their feet, and threw peanut shells and bags down upon those who sat in the more expensive seats. There was a policeman up in the cheaper seats and he took off his helmet and passed his handkerchief over the sweat-band. Someone offered the policeman some whiskey, but he laughed and said that he had to be sober while on duty. He said it was hard luck, boys, but his old woman would give him hell if she caught him tanked up.

By the time it had grown dark, every inch of space was filled. Detached, white clouds of smoke floated over the heads of the spectators. It was a night icy clear, crystal with stars above, very sharp and quick beneath. The air was intoxicating, fresh from the mountains; for now that the mines were shut down there were no sulphur fumes, no poisonous acids in the air. The night air was so light and titillating that the stars and moon seemed suspended, by long strings, from the sky. This sharpness, this keenness was somehow barbaric, frightfully crude. Harry, Louis, and David drew more closely together as though they feared that there was something in the evening that would annihilate them. Their shoulders touched and they felt a comfort in the contact, under the cold, bright stars.

The preliminaries were given over to the pupils of Dan O'Leary's school. First, two lightweights sprang at one another, but they were so impotent that they drew jeers and laughter from the audience. "Hey, quit makin' love, you

sissies!" shouted one husky voice from the cheap seats. There were other shouts of derision that took all the starch out of the fighters, and at the end of the third round, the bout was declared a draw, and somebody threw a whiskey-flask into the ring. The flask broke and splattered glass all over, and a negro came out with a broom, and someone hit him in the face with a tomato, but he went on sweeping the glass just the same. "You lousy coon!" came a voice, but it didn't make any difference, the negro didn't stop until he had collected all the broken glass in a dust-pan.

There were two preliminaries, awkward and slow; and they were showered with peanuts, fruit, and someone threw a cabbage which hit one of the fighters on his back. He stopped and thumbed his nose at the crowd, and many applauded him, and some hissed. The girl who had been smoking a cigarette leaned over and whispered something in her escort's ear, and he broke out into superior, sophomoric laughter. The girl lit another cigarette and crossed her legs, and someone in the cheap seats called out that if she didn't throw the cigarette away she'd burn herself in a ticklish place. The girl blew the smoke out of her mouth, scornfully.

Dan O'Leary stepped out into the center of the ring and raised both his hands. He was cheered, and after the cheering, a voice called, "How much you gettin' out of it, Dan?" and everybody laughed, and Dan leaned over the ropes and whispered something to a newspaper man. Then he began to roar out of his mouth, squeezing the words out of the corner of his lips in thick, juicy slabs of sound. Sol came out into the center of the ring, and the crowd made a roof of noise over his head, and somebody cried,

> Sheeny go broke,
> Sheeny get soap,
> Sheeny go wash de window.

But Sol didn't give a damn and held out his right arm and shook his hand at the audience. He had a green bathrobe over him, and it kept slipping off his shoulder, disclosing part of his naked, hairy chest. His breasts were like two great laundry irons.

After Sol had gone to his corner and seated himself, Kid Burke came on, and the crowd leaned forward to look at the man. Thousands of eyes thirsted for him and drank him up through the keen, icy air. There was not much applause, and the arena had grown still as the thousands of eyes leapt forward and fastened themselves on the fine figure of Kid Burke, until he was covered with eyes, all over his face, his chest, his shanks and calves. He stood straight under the flood of white light and jerked his head and lifted only the lower part of his arm in greeting, as though he were saving it for later. Dan O'Leary was introducing the referee and Kid Burke walked back to his corner. He threw off lights and shades of experience, nuances of life that he had lived here and there and beyond. He looked as though he had fed on life, had digested the most nourishing of it and thrown the rest away. He quivered with a poised, sleek health. He walked from his hips with scarcely a motion of his shoulders. He sat down in his corner and glared at Sol for a moment, then lowered his eyes to the floor. And he kept them there until the gong sounded.

The referee wore neat white trousers. They said that he was a man from California who had refereed the bout between Jimmy Britt and Terry McGovern; but some said that it was not so at all. He had refereed something else and he came from Australia. His name was Tom Guerney and he came from Sydney, somebody said. There was a long argument about it, some holding that he had refereed a bout that Jimmy Britt fought in Frisco, and others saying that he never saw Jimmy Britt.

The bell rang sharp and clear through the night, and it

seemed to Harry that if people were listening on West Granite Street, they could hear the bell, the sound traveled so far, with a ringing insistence, through the thin air. Sol and the Kid barely touched their gloves. They had seemed too casual up to the ringing of the bell, as if their thoughts and emotions and energies were tightly sealed within them. But now they were releasing themselves. They were throwing out perceptions, one after another, a chain of them. They were releasing sight and feeling and sound and a thousand particles of sensations. They were examining each other and noting this and that about each other. Sol stepped forward and shot out an arm, and Kid Burke moved his head, slightly, and the glove slid helplessly down the Kid's face, on to the Kid's shoulder. When Sol had started to shoot out that right arm, something had moved in Kid Burke, an idea had whirled around in his brain keeping time to the approach of Sol's hand; and so when the glove had touched him, a vulnerable spot had disappeared and Sol was too late. But immediately, the Kid had countered with his left and he hit true, for Sol had not thought as quickly, and the tempo of his skill was not as finely motivated as the Kid's. Sol led, striking out wildly with both hands, but Kid Burke tied him up and they clinched for perhaps five seconds. They were entangled in one another, their elbows shooting in and out. Blows were being delivered away from eyes, away from the crowd. The Kid was hammering Sol's stomach and ribs, and his arms were like pistons set to a quick speed. The referee stepped in between them, walked in front of them and stepped to one side. This time, the Kid stepped forward quickly and caught Sol flush on the jaw. The sound of the blow was crisp and tearing, and the crowd gasped. Sol moved his head this way and that, shaking the blow out of his head, his thoughts, shaking it until he had dropped its pain on the floor where he could dance upon it nimbly. But an echo of that jolt stayed in

him. The outline of the blow stayed with him, red and angry at first, then faintly red and aggrieved. Sol was more careful now and feinted and side-stepped, warned by that first blow, watching out of sharp eyes lest he be caught again. They exchanged harmless rights and then Sol shot out his left and caught the Kid on the cheek. The spectators cheered in delight, for Sol was Silver Bow and the honor of Silver Bow was at stake. Sol stepped into the painful nearness of Kid Burke and was knocked back by the Kid's right to the jaw. But it was not as damaging a blow as the first one. Sol felt its force less. As the round ended, wrote the reporter for the *Silver Bow Daily News,* Kid Burke was rushing Sol to the ropes with a rapid fire of rights and lefts. The Kid's round by a healthy margin.

"You dirty bum, go back to New York, you dirty bum!" yelled someone in the cheap seats. And someone answered, "Shut your trap. He'll kill the Jew." And the bell rang for the second round.

The Kid sprang out of his corner as if eager to resume where he had left off; he was fighting on his toes, and his legs were young legs with never a stitch of pain in them. Sol met him in the center of the ring and was overwhelmed in a cloudburst of blows. No one could rightly see where the blows were landing, they came so fast, with such an impetuous ferocity. An ooze of blood appeared from Sol's nostrils and the crowd leaned forward smelling the blood, feeling it in their mouths, passing their lips over Sol's blood. Sol was enraged at the Kid's audacity. He fought back bravely, maneuvered himself into a clinch, but the Kid again tore, with the sharp teeth of his gloves, at Sol's ribs and stomach, slashing them until they were red and sore. Harry shrank back into his seat and felt the pain in him. Now he was closer to Sol than he had ever been before, and he felt Sol's blood clogging the cells of his brain and felt the itching soreness of Sol's ribs. Would the referee never

separate them? Harry closed his eyes and opened them again, and he saw that the fighters were still in a clinch. But now the referee had wedged himself between them, craftily, as though he had rubbed butter over himself and could slide between the combating bodies. Once more detached, Sol tried an uppercut and for once found the Kid's chin unprotected. For a moment, Burke was astounded and stood there blinking his astonishment. Rage, fire ran from row to row and ignited the crowd. A swift running flame hurled itself out of the ring and burned up the night, and the crowd stood on its feet and swallowed the flame into its throat. Get at him! Follow him up! Kill the God-damned son-of-a-bitch! The crowd revolved in a merry-go-round of lust and passion. Around and around and became stationary when Kid Burke refused to fall. Instead, he had shaken off his stupor, and in revenge, had torn Sol's skin from temple to jaw into a red gash, a chasm of blood. He bored into Sol's eyes and closed one of them. Singermann was in poor shape as he went to his corner, wrote the reporter, his face cut and bleeding and one eye closed. He had started in like a lion, but he had come out in the shambles. The Kid's round.

"Hey, Singermann, you better go home!" cried a voice high in the air. The voice shot out of the depths of the crowd, up to the stars, and echoed back again. "You better go home, Sol!"

"The poor kid's no match for Burke," whispered Louis. "But God, he's swell! I don't know where he comes from, standing up to punishment like that. He's not a Singermann, and I don't know where he comes from. I'd be dead."

"His face is torn," whispered Harry. "It's like a bullfight in Spain, so hard, so bloody, and Kid Burke only has to move out of the way with a sly motion. He's like a toreador, and I don't see how I'll be able to stand any more of it." But David only watched out of wide, brilliant eyes, bright and inexpressive, and said nothing.

In the fourth round, Sol began to go through the motions of fighting without fighting at all. The Kid beat him unmercifully on the head and in the stomach. Each blow was terrific and detached, and the crowd could hear each blow, a sound full of pain, a quick, shattering blow that cried, Pain! Harry could hardly bear to look at Sol now, his brother was so shattered and stumbling and running with blood. It was time the referee stopped it, or Sol would be dead. The blows were loud and angry, full of thunder and pain, yet Sol took them all and kept on his feet. This was the suffering man who refused to acknowledge defeat, thought Harry, and loved his brother magnificently, and with a respectful awe. He would stand up until he was killed. Harry rose from his seat and cried, "Stop it! Stop it! You're killing him!" But he realized that no one had heard him. The crowd had been shrieking throughout the round. They had changed favorites. They were calling on the Kid to knock Sol out. Each man in the crowd was now Kid Burke. Each man was conscious of a power that would defeat the most formidable of antagonists. For a time they had been in Sol's corner because he was Silver Bow, someone close to them, someone who had lived under the same sky, breathing familiar air. But as Kid Burke lashed in blow after blow, the crowd was swept to a frenzy of annihilation, and they were not separate individuals at all. They were Kid Burke. His hands were theirs, his muscles, his speed, the drive of his arms were theirs. They inhabited Kid Burke. They were in love with Kid Burke's strength and skill and vigor. They were seduced by the shrewd male tenacity of Kid Burke.

Sol could no longer move. He was backed up against the ropes while Kid Burke flailed him at will. The blood that ran from Sol's eyes and nose and mouth formed in a small pool on his chin, and one of the men at the ringside found a drop of Sol's blood on his wrist. He held his hand above

his head to show everyone before he wiped the blood off with a clean white pocket handkerchief. Sol began to sag, first his shoulders, then his chest. His head was a punching bag bereft of movement, his shoulders seemed to be slipping down his arms, through his wrists and fingers in drops of blood. Harry stood watching with wide, crazed eyes until someone from behind shoved him unceremoniously down into his seat.

"That's the way to take a beating," said David suddenly, and laughed with tears in his eyes. "Standing up! Standing up!"

"That's all boloney," said Louis. "I tell you he's stupid. He should run away! Sol, Sol! Give up! It isn't worth it! Don't stand there and suffer. But run away! Give up, you fool!"

"To stand there like that and take it," sobbed David. "I could never do it."

The three brothers stared at Sol. They saw him brace himself for a moment and smile. He lifted one corner of his tortured mouth into a smile as if the joke were on him. Then, one of Sol's handlers threw a sponge into the center of the ring. The bell rang. Sol held on to the ropes. He moved to the center of the ring and kicked at the sponge, angrily.

Harry was engulfed in the crowd. He was an eddy in a madly rushing stream that swirled and beat about him. The crowd had lost its senses and was pushing forward and back again and once more forward. Harry was swept to the outer gates of the ring along with the crowd, the multitudinous Kid Burkes. There were voices breaking in his ears, splitting the drums of his ears, words with the sharp, glinting edges of axe blades. "The Company's hiring scabs!" somebody cried. "They're putting on scabs at the Anaconda Mine. They've brought in scabs from out of town, a lot of

lousy railroad men, a lot of lousy Mexicans!" And then the mob saw itself as Kid Burke more vividly, in sharper outlines. The mob was Kid Burke and the mining company was Sol. The mob was a rushing fever, a plague that flowed from one body to another. One hand that touched another, one shoulder that touched another carried a plague, a running fever. "Down with the scabs! Down with the bastards!" Harry was impregnated with the mob's feeling; he was burned through and through with resentment, and his blood was like molten lead running through his veins. He was now as much of a miner on strike as the man next to him, though he had never been down a mine. Sol's defeat, Sol's blood was in him like a burning fever, and he could not cool; his reason was a chariot running amuck. "We'll get the scabs!" he cried at the top of his voice. "We'll get the dirty scabs!" and the edges of his voice were ragged and torn with resentment, anger. A dragon of murderous rage was consuming him. He was eaten by the dragon, but he was whole and powerful within the dragon. The mob pressed forward, away from the rink, up Montana Street, a human river of madness running through the wretched streets of Silver Bow. One member of the mob was driven by another; they were carried up the hill to the mines by a momentum of rage, plague, fever and the power, the tigerish tenacity of Kid Burke.

They were on the copper hill running towards the gates of the Anaconda Mine when someone cried out, "The soldiers! Look out for the soldiers! They brought in the dirty militia! They're going to kill us like rats!" The voice blew up into a hundred pieces, and the fragments of the voice shot up into the cold night air and fell again on the heads of the mob, stunning them. "Come on, you fellows," yelled another voice that had something more than rage in it, a deeper note of leadership. "If they shoot at us, the blood'll be on their hands. Down with the miserable scabs! Long live

the Industrial Workers of the World!" And another voice cried in a pious singsong, the voice of a sinner in the bawdy throes of conversion, "We have nothing to lose and the whole world to gain. Workers, unite! Workers, unite! Workers, unite!" The words beat through Harry's veins, through his heart and temples. Workers, unite! Workers, unite! Workers, unite! The mob reached the tall wooden fences that were built about the Anaconda Mine; but they were suddenly halted.

The night was clear, the moon was brilliant, the stars icy, and the fire and blood of the mob was swiftly coagulating, contracting within itself. Over the top of the fence had appeared the cold, passionless mouths of a hundred rifles. "Men, get back!" was the order from behind the tall fence. "Get back to your homes before there's trouble!" The rifles looked straight at the small band; the muzzles had expressionless, dark holes of eyes. Certain members of the mob moved back and then started running wildly in an opposite direction, back into the town. Only ten or fifteen remained to look back into the eyes of the rifles on the fence. "Open that gate!" cried one of the strikers, and suddenly the moon caught hold of a revolver this man had removed from his pocket. He saw a figure through a crack in the fence and fired, crying, "Workers, unite! Workers, unite!" There was a cry of pain from behind the fence, but it was stamped down by a renewed shouting, "We want to get them scabs! We'll blow your old mines to old Hell!" What was left of the mob started forward to break down the fence, and the cold rifles stabbed fire into them. A whip of steel lashed down upon them and for a half-minute the smoke made a secret of the tragedy. Then there were cries of fear, of anguish. And a man threw up blood into Harry's hands.

The man started to lean with all his weight against Harry, and the man's eyes grew larger than Harry had ever seen eyes grow. He could see the circles of the pupils plain and

the tiny clots of blood in the corners of the eyes. Harry was angry, for the man was leaning against him too heavily, he thought. It was a bad enough pickle to be in without a stranger heaving against him this way and showing the whites of his eyes as if he expected Harry to do something. The eyes were still terribly open and the man slid down Harry's chest, down his legs, and the man's head was futile somehow as it slipped between Harry's feet. The strikers were retreating. Harry caught vaguely at their legs running past him away from the mine, away back there where the rifles could not get at them. Some of them were moaning, "The bastards, the bastards," and that was the extent of everything they knew and reached back to the beginning of their lives, and forward to the end of their lives. Harry bent over the man who lay at his feet and saw that the eyes were still open as though the lids had been stitched tightly to the lower part of the forehead. "Get up, get up," whispered Harry and began to sob. He wanted the man to blink and get up and run away with him. He shook the man's shoulders, and he felt that he was doing the man an injury, so he just lifted him under the arms and began dragging him. "If you'd only help me," gasped Harry. Another striker with blood running down from his forehead to his mouth came up to Harry and said, "Beat it, kid. You can't do anything for this guy. Can't you see he's croaked?"

"Help me with him," sighed Harry.

"But he's croaked. Can't you see his eyes?" asked the man becoming strangely vexed.

The softness of the dead man's hair against his legs made Harry weak with sadness and pity. A dead man to have soft hair like that, so soft against your body. How can a dead man's hair be so soft? "They're goin' to shoot again!" shrieked the man with the blood-dirty face. "Christ, help us all! They're goin' to shoot!" Harry looked down at the head of the dead man for a second, and he saw how young

the hair was, long and alive and falling over the dead man's forehead. When he stepped free of the dead man and followed the others down the hill, he felt that he was doing the dead man a great wrong. As he ran he saw soldiers coming towards him, and one grabbed at his arm, but Harry twisted away and ran on. He reached the bottom of the hill and found himself on East Copper Street. He was alone now, a youth alone, running through the frosty night. As he ran, he could feel the dead man's hair against his legs. It was a great pity such hair should be locked away from human fingers and women's lips and breasts. The man's hair was against him, his heart, his breast, his eyes as he ran west on Copper Street and down to Granite Street. He was astonished to see the house where he lived, slept and ate. There was smoke coming out of the chimney. He flung himself into the warm radiance of the rooms. His mother was in the kitchen ironing shirts, and he would wear his shirt and be alive under it. *"Vus ist di?"* she cried looking up at his strange appearance. "Harry? Harry?" She looked at him and he held his head against her breast and could not stop weeping. He could not lift his head from her breast, and he could feel his tears wet against her. He could not speak, not for a long time, and Rebecca murmured. *"Ah-h, mon kint! Mon kint! Zug mir, mon kint! Vus vehnst di, nu?"* And Harry said at last, "I saw them kill a man! The soldiers!" And he burst into a frantic impotence of weeping, until his whole body ached, and he could not leave his mother's breast at all.

Sol swayed against the ropes in his corner, and he seemed to see the world through a curtain of fluid pain. A red mist of pain dripped down from the skies, but he saw through it by an effort of the will. He would have smiled only for the pain of twisting his mouth. Kid Burke leaned over as if to embrace him, but Sol knew that Kid Burke was showing

off and tried to free himself. But the Kid would not let go, caressing Sol and loving him. "I'm sorry," whispered the Kid. "It'll happen to me some day."

"Aw, let me go," said Sol. "Don't hang around me."

David and Louis appeared in the ring, and Sol saw their limbs and features as running colors and not firm. They touched him timidly. "Are you all right? Can I do anything?"

"Don't hang around me," muttered Sol. "There ain't nothing the matter with me. Aw, say, you guys."

And then Sol was aware of Frank Doyle helping him into his bathrobe. "Hello, Frank. Where'd you come from, old sock?" He let Frank help him out of the ring into his dressing room. And for an hour while men came in and out and whispered about him, Sol allowed Frank Doyle to bathe his wounds with a sponge. "He's a good fighter, that Burke," said Sol. "But I'm on to him now. Next time I fight him, I'll knock him out."

Next day the newspaper said, *Singermann wants return bout.*

Frank helped Sol into a hack, and as they were driving up Montana Street, Sol said, "Well, well. I suppose now you're going to say some more prayers for me, huh, Frank?"

"Sure, if ye want me to," answered Frank. "The trouble is, ye don't believe strong enough in the Lord Jesus Christ."

"I don't think Jesus Christ could have helped me, tonight," smiled Sol. "Ouch! We Jews ain't got much of a pull with Jesus Christ. But He sure loves the Irish."

"Would ye be likin' to stop off now at St. Patrick's whilst I'd be sayin' a word for ye?" asked Frank Doyle.

"Sure, go ahead," said Sol. For he was very fond of Frank Doyle somehow, since Frank was so opposite to him in every way. He liked Frank to be near him now, though he could not clearly say why. Only, he liked to feel Frank near him and touching him like this, and he thought it was

mighty nice of Frank to be so concerned about him. In another way of looking at it, the whole business of praying was damn foolishness, if you asked him. It was so foolish, it did him good. It was like April Fool's day when you tie a tin can to a dog's tail or something. So they left the carriage in front of St. Patrick's and Frank helped Sol up the steps into the church. And it was beautiful inside with only the candles burning, and some were tall and gave off tiny blue flames; but some had melted down so that they were only flames burning fiercely in contempt of expiration.

And so Frank sought out the shrine of St. Francis, his patron saint, and said a prayer plopped down on both his knees. As Frank prayed, Sol saw a woman, haggard, and with her hair untidy, stumble into the church, and she knelt sobbing in front of the Holy Mother. Frank got up and passed the sobbing woman, and waited until she could rise. Then she moaned and said that there had been a fight on the hill and the soldiers had fired on the strikers, and there were men killed. And maybe her man was among them. "Did you see him, tonight?" moaned the woman. "He's Matt Shay, dark, with long, soft hair, and it's hours since I saw him. And he said something about fighting the scabs." At this point the woman fainted, and a priest came down the aisle and whispered, "Now, my child. Now, my child. Christ will not desert you."

"There was a fight on the hill," Frank Doyle was saying to Sol as they got back into the carriage. "Oh, the dear Lord, there was a fight and some of the boys was killed for sure. Oh, the dear Lord!" Frank Doyle looked fixedly out of the glass of the carriage upon the sinister streets. He pulled at his hands, and whispered, "It had to come. They was spoilin' for it and it had to come. And men killed on the hill. The Company got the militia over from Helena, an' there was shots fired an' men killed. Oh, the dear Lord!"

But Sol was intent upon himself. He was far away from

Frank Doyle now, and separate from Frank Doyle. He was altogether within himself. "He's a good man, sure. But I'm wise to him now, an' next time we meet there'll be a different story. Discouraged? Who says I'm discouraged? I fought him four rounds, an' if he hadn't closed one o' my eyes, I'd 'a' licked him. Who ever said he was so much? Hell. If he hadn't closed my eye . . . Hell. I'll fight him again an' knock holy hell out of him."

"There was a fight on the hill," muttered Frank Doyle. "Can a man fight guns, bullets? Oh, the dear Lord. There was murder on the hill tonight an' they brought in scabs to work the mines."

"A little sore," said Sol. "That's all. I'm just a little sore. A scratch or two. I ain't through with that guy. Next time we meet there'll be a different story."

FOURTEEN: THE WIND PASSETH OVER

Late in November the strike was settled. By that time, there was snow on the ground and the outdoors had a hot-cold feeling, so cold at times that objects burned to the touch. November was congested with discomfort. The days were gray and blue, not the soft warm blue of summer, but the thin, shrill blue of winter pricking the skin of hands and face. It was an enemy blue and a reproachful gray and not the sweet soft shades of summer in June and July.

Business had been bad during the strike, and Moses had fretted and harbored grudges, losing his temper frequently. He had bought heavily during the previous summer, anticipating a brisk fall and winter trade; but the strike had knocked all the life and profit out of the early cold spell. Moses had gone about cursing the miners in one breath and the Company in the next. Of the two, he was inclined to sympathize with the Company; his old prejudice against radicals had grown more intense with the years. Yet when a striking miner came into the store and asked for merchandise on credit, Moses would commiserate with him, and the miner would not go away empty-handed.

When the strike ended, there was a rush to the stores and merchandise began to move quickly. The Singermann brothers were busy all day, and Michael was pressed into service after school hours. Sol was still fighting; but he made so little money that he helped in the store on those days when he was free to do so. He had knocked out a few men, but they were not first-rate fighters; and when he was matched with a good man the best decision he could get was a draw. He had cauliflower ears, his nose was flattened until

it resembled that of a gorilla, and there were scars all over his face, as though his skin had been spattered with shot. But he took no notice of his wounds. To hear Sol talk, you would never believe that he had ever been beaten. Always, he was coming back for more.

Dan O'Leary was through and told Sol that he had better quit, too, because he would never make the first-rate division. Sol told Dan to go to Hell and went in partnership with a man named Gus Leeker, a small, wiry man who always went about dressed in a flaming, striped sweater and never wore a coat, not even at night when he went sporting with the girls. This Leeker made a living in various ways. Sometimes he worked in the smelters for a few weeks at a stretch; and sometimes he helped out in Shilling's pool room, taking care of the cues and the pool tables and betting on races that were being run down in Kentucky. But some said that Gus Leeker was no good at all, and that he had a couple of girls around town and he made them give him a percentage of their earnings. Sol didn't believe it. He asked Gus about it, and Gus answered that he was no damn pimp and he'd kill anybody who said so. And Sol repeated what Gus had told him; but it didn't seem to make any difference to the gossips; and they persisted in saying that Gus sure had a couple of girls he was sweating. He had brought them from Nevada where they had trimmed a state official out of a lot of money. But Gus said it was a damn lie, he was no pimp.

Sol said that he didn't care what Gus did on the side. Gus was a good fight manager, and none of us are angels. And so Gus was always in Sol's corner whenever Sol was fighting. But it didn't do the least bit of good; Sol was getting nowhere. By this time, Kid Burke was champion of the world and raking in the big coin and getting pieces written about him in the New York *American* and the San Francisco *Examiner*.

One morning Moses found it difficult to get out of bed and start the fire going in the kitchen. At this time the old hired girl, Mary O'Brien, had married her sweetheart from Ireland and she had children of her own and was living up in Dublin Gulch. There was a new girl in the Singermann house named Susie Beranno, and she was a lazy Hungarian and she wouldn't get up in the morning to start the fire, so Moses had to. Saturday morning, Moses wouldn't go near the stove, for it was the Sabbath; and in the winter, Saturday morning was ice-cold, and nobody did a thing about it, and Michael hated to get out of bed. He could see his breath, white and hard, in the air.

But this morning it was Thursday, and Moses felt out of sorts. His heavy, compact body was running pains from his head to his feet, slow, jerky pains that slid down the wires of his nerves into his feet. Moses sighed deeply. He had been dreaming of going back to Roumania with a lot of money, back to the village where he had been born, and where everyone knew him from the rabbi to the beggars. "Look, it is Moses Singermann back from America!" everyone said as Moses passed through the streets, wearing his suit that had been made by a big Chicago firm. Moses was so glad to be back in the Roumanian village that he smiled at everyone and stopped to exchange jokes with the soldiers and the shopkeepers and the winepressers. He entered the inn that was once his own, and he ordered wine and paid for it with a big tip. "Oh, yes," Moses said to the innkeeper, "America is a fine, big country and I made plenty of money there. America is such a big country that it takes you a week to go from New York to San Francisco." "A week?" repeated the innkeeper opening his mouth wide, and "A week?" repeated everyone within hearing, all opening their mouths wide. "Would you believe it?" asked Moses, "And everybody makes money in America. But

here, what have you got? What is there here in this barren country?"

But even as Moses asked the question, he sat back in his chair and sipped his red wine, thinking, How fine it is to be home again in my own country! How warm my blood is, how free my mind! How smoothly my skin runs along my bones, sitting here drinking red wine in my own country! All the time that Moses was saying, "Ah, America is a fine, big country with plenty of money," he was feeling, How good, how beautiful it is to be home again, sitting here asleep in my skin and drinking red wine with my friends! This afternoon, he would go and visit his old Mimi Ruchel, his father's sister, and he would give her a fifty-dollar gold piece that he had brought all the way from Silver Bow. He would see the delight in her old eyes. And he would visit with his old brother, past eighty now, and going to Jerusalem pretty soon to die. And he would go to the synagogue and pray, *Let us adore the ever-living God, and render praise unto Him who spread out the heavens and established the earth, whose glory is revealed in the heavens above and whose greatness is manifest throughout the world.* He would pray in his full, golden voice until everyone in the synagogue would be silent, listening to him as he prayed, and they would say, "Hear our old friend, Moses Singermann, who has been away these many years in America! Do you know that he brought his Mimi Ruchel a gold piece that has made her rich until she is dead? Let us do honor unto our old friend, Moisha." But Moses would be praying, all the while conscious that they were honoring him. He would be praying, *He is our God; there is none else. We bow the head and bend the knee and magnify the King of kings, the Holy One, praised be He. God of all the world! God of America! But Thou art closer to me here in Roumania, where I was a child and a young man, and I did adore Thee with the words of a young man!* And Moses

would give the rabbi fifty dollars for the synagogue and go out into the sweet air, the soft peace of Roumania.

Then, as he was walking out of the inn, he felt a fever running over him and he was in a steam bath of fever, for he saw that he was not walking out into Roumania, but instead he was entering his store in Silver Bow. The fever battled him and bit him all over into tiny, multitudinous sores, like mosquitoes of a humid evening; and he tried to kill the mosquitoes of fever, but they were too many for him, buzzing into his blood, alighting upon his nerves and tearing at them. The placid curtain of Roumania was ripped away, and what he saw were shoes, socks, valises, underwear, lunch buckets, boots, slickers, suits, and he heard the cash register ringing and he saw numbers on the glass of the cash register. So he tried to find the inn, but the place was not there; and he thought, It will never be there for me, any more. And he fell to sobbing, but he found that he could not sob, because he must cough until the ribs along his side were sore and he spat blood. He was coughing and he awakened and found that it was Thursday in Silver Bow and he must get up and start the fire. He groaned when he thought that Roumania had slipped out of his grasp. He might have slept a few minutes longer and wandered into the vineyards he had known as a boy and as a young man. In a dream, so many things can happen in a few minutes, and it is possible to be well contented with everything in a few minutes.

"Vus is da madder mit dir, Moisha? Vus krachst di?" asked Rebecca who slept on the other side of the bed with her back to him. Rebecca was sullen to think that Moses should be coughing and groaning so, because he was rarely sick, and when he was just a little bit out of sorts he made such a noise about it. And here she was bothered with insomnia and backache and indigestion, and you never heard her coughing and groaning to wake the world.

"Ah. Ech bin kronk!" groaned Moses. "I got such a fever with cold all over me, like I was ice and underneath was fire." But he struggled out of bed and stood a wretched figure on the floor in his ribbed underwear, and his face was damp and he continued to cough. He looked for his trousers and pulled them on, and he put on his shirt, but as he bent over his shoes, he was coughing without relief, and spitting. *"Geh!"* Rebecca told him in a provoked voice. *"Vus schpeist di?* Is this a place to spit? In the room on the carpet?" But Moses shivered and said, "Look, it is blood." And Rebecca muttered, "It is a little cold, and why should you make such a holler? Go, in peace."

Presently she heard him stuffing paper into the stove and using the meat axe to chop the kindling into smaller pieces, but she heard his coughing above these familiar sounds. He struck matches, and Rebecca could hear the wind in the chimney draw the flame out of the stove up the pipes. Moses was rattling coals into the stove, but above this familiar sound was his hacking, persistent cough and his groaning, *"Oi, veh! Oi, si schmartst mir! Oi, veh!"* But the fire was sound and vigorous now, and Rebecca could smell the stove polish warm and sooty emanating from the heat of the stove.

So she lifted herself out of bed and came into the kitchen and saw Moses bent over the table, over his coffee, and the olive of his skin looked green. It occurred to her that he might be sick after all, and then she put the thought away, impatiently, for he was such a healthy, strong man, and he ought not to be sick. *"Vist mir riefen dem doktor?"* she asked. And he replied miserably, "Doktors! They know nothing, only you should pay them five dollars for a visit. *Zoll zey aron in dreard, die doktors!"* He lifted himself to his feet and drew on his overcoat, first along one arm, then along the other. Rebecca did not offer to help him; his familiarity was too drawn into her, too antipathetic to her sensitive nerves. She rarely touched him nowadays, except

perhaps when they touched accidentally in slumber. She had lived with him too many years in vexation, and his habits and speech did not flow smoothly in her. But she said, "Take the street car and if you feel bad come home and I will call the doktor." He moved to the front door, opened it, and a gust of cold, sulphurous wind blew into the house and was icy against Rebecca's legs. *"Vermach die teer, in Gott's numen!"* she called. Moses slammed the door and was out of the house.

He got to the corner and waited for the street car, but there was some delay; and he waited, but he grew so chilled that he cried out a curse upon the street cars of the world, and took to walking. Successive spasms of chills moved up and down through his body as though he were a sieve; and when he arrived at the store, he was so weak that he felt incapable of carrying out the show. If he did not get ready for business quickly, early customers would wander across the street to Joseph's place where the show was already out, in its place; and he could see Joseph dusting the shoes and fixing cards straight on the merchandise. He had not spoken to Joseph in a number of years, but he had wanted his oldest son many times, and the separation had been hard for him. In the old days, he and Joseph had always been together. They had come from Roumania together, and Joseph had been his first helper on the peddler's wagon in Minneapolis. His oldest son! Someone to rely upon, to go to, to feel near to oneself! He knew so intimately Joseph's mannerisms, the way Joseph's face grew white when he was angry, and the way Joseph walked up to a customer, saying, "What can I do for you, friend?" All Joseph's ways were a necessity to Moses now that he felt these hot and cold waves passing over him, and he thought that he would go over to his oldest son, and say, "Joe, I feel a little sick. What will I do, Joe? Maybe I should call a doktor?" Joseph would tell him what to do; and even Daisy might be sympathetic

and say, "He is sick, your father. Take care of him, Joseph. I can see that he is sick."

So Moses was about to humble himself and cross the street over to Joseph's place when he saw David coming; and he went back into the store and sat down near the desk in the rear and coughed. When Louis came he saw that his father looked weak. "You shouldn't be here, papa. I'll take you home," said Louis. But a customer came in to look at a suit of clothes, and Moses could not go while such an important sale hung fire. And before Harry and Sol arrived, other customers came into buy candlesticks and lunch-buckets for the mines, and Moses could not go home. But at noon he took to trembling so, and his face looked so green, that his sons prevailed upon him to go home, and Moses thought that would be best. When Harry offered to go with him, Moses said, "No, you may be busy. Don't you know this is pay day? But I'll be back after I take a rest."

When Moses started walking home, the day had grown dark as night; the stores had put on their lights, and Moses could see that there was business in town. He did not seem to be walking any more, but his legs floated along, and he might be going any place through the darkness. He had always walked sturdily, a man of strength and power, and his shoes had made good sounds when they struck against the pavement. But now he felt the wind blowing him along as though he were a feather drifting through a noon that was darkness. The beginning of the day was evening; and Moses felt night closing in about him, peering into his eyes and permeating into his veins. It might be, thought Moses, that I am no more young and now the years have this way of showing themselves in me. It might be that the years are mad in me because I always laughed on them, the years.

Rebecca had said to him that if he felt sick he was to come home; but it was the last thing she expected. Years and years had passed since he had left off his work in the

middle of the day. It was something outside of her remembered experience to see Moses during the day when the world was moving briskly, and you could see the wheels of the day moving round and round, creating a hum of labor. Between the hours of nine and six, the house was a woman's house. Between these hours, the floor creaked to women's steps, and the knobs of the doors were touched by women's hands. The atmosphere of the house was meticulously patterned off into numberless feminine chores, and the air held an odor of women about their work, women polishing furniture, and women combing out their hair. Between the hours of daylight and dusk, men were out of focus in the house, and when they appeared, when their footsteps were heard, the atmosphere was shattered and the arrangement of the furniture was wrong. Rebecca's thoughts during the day were of household affairs and such things as polishing the stove and soaking the meat in salt water and threading the needle. The men were shadows at the back of her pressing affairs; her thoughts revolved about such things as cleaning windows and making beds and beating rugs and drying her hair on the back porch, in the sun. It was not until evening that menfolk with their heavy tread, their deep voices, and male smells had any reality for her. During daylight hours, the streets of houses belonged to women, and when evening came the men were allowed in the houses. And that was when the men became real again, after the day hours of baking bread and buying fruit from the peddler and watering the geranium plants.

Rebecca saw Moses come into the house as though it were not his house, but a woman's; and he looked so unhappy, so bewildered, that she felt sorry and helped him off with his hat and coat, and even began unlacing his shoes. She was sorry for his bewilderment, his wretchedness, but at the same time she felt that the house resented him because it was only one o'clock, and the furniture was not accus-

tomed to him so early in the day. He was trembling, his teeth were chattering, and he groaned and coughed and sighed, *"Oi, veh! Oi, finster is mir in kopf!"* Rebecca sent the girl to the drug store for mustard plasters; and she filled the rubber bottles with steaming water from the teakettle and placed them at his feet. Before Moses had come, there had been a serenity about the house, that cool, discerning serenity of a house in midday when the men are at work, when the men are vague shadows at the back of women's minds. But now, Moses lay gasping in his bed, and his breath was hurried as though he were running away from his fever and his fever would not let him go. Rebecca looked at him and a feeling of contempt came over her. He had always been so strong and he had never come near her when she was sick, not in the last few years had he come near her. When she lay in bed with a cold, or when she was near delivering Michael, he only touched the outskirts of her pain and did not enter with her into suffering. But now that he was ill, he wanted her to enter into his pain, and was angry when she looked on with contempt. She thought that he was playing at illness. She realized that he was not his usual self, but the sick part she felt was small, and the sham of suffering was large. She was sure that it was all a man's show, and she could not enter into his pain. And she could not get over the vague, inarticulate resentment of a tradition broken, of her daytime house assaulted and ravished by a man who belonged only to the evening and night.

He groaned and chafed and cried out to her to busy herself; he was dying, he said, and she did nothing. *"Ech schtarb!"* he cried, *"und die tiest gurnisht. Bist a frau?"* And she answered that he was making a big fuss over nothing. What was it but a cold, and if he wanted to get better he should lie still and not make such a *geshrei.* But she told the girl to call Dr. Schwartz. Rebecca, herself, could not use

the complicated automatic telephone with its disc and strange numbers. Susie, the hired girl, looked sullen at the unexpected duties which lay in wait for her, but she called Dr. Schwartz who answered that he would be right over. When Rebecca went back into the bedroom and told Moses that she had called Dr. Schwartz, he groaned louder and said that this doctor was a young fool and would probably charge ten dollars, and for ten dollars he could get Dr. MacDonald who was a big man at the St. James Hospital.

Dr. Schwartz was very young and not long out of a Western medical school. He was conscious of himself because he was handsome, and the young girls of Silver Bow said it gave them quite a thrill just to have him sit by the side of their beds. And so wherever Dr. Schwartz was, he looked as if he were there to sit by the side of a girl's bed. When he drove his smart roadster through the streets of Silver Bow, he looked as if he were driving to the house of a pretty girl to sit by her bed. He was young and slim and fashionable, and he had a mellow, soothing voice, and many girls said they were sick just to hear his voice and to touch his hand. And so he had quite a reputation in the town with his tailored clothes and his snappy roadster and his football shoulders. Rebecca took him into Moses' room, and the young doctor felt of Moses' pulse and took Moses' temperature. And he said it was just a bad cold. He wrote a prescription, and Moses asked him if an alcohol rub would not be a good thing, and Dr. Schwartz said that he didn't see any objection to an alcohol rub. After he had written his prescription, Dr. Schwartz grew chatty, and asked, "How does it feel to be at home, Moses, this time of day?" And Moses replied, "Very bad." "How old are you now?" asked Dr. Schwartz. "Oh, maybe fifty, fifty-five, fifty-nine," answered Moses. "I feel very bad, doktor." "Well, you ought to let up a little now," said the doctor buoyantly. "You got big, healthy sons, and you ought to let them run the

business. You ought to retire." *"Azoi?"* asked Moses petulantly. "Maybe you would like to run my business for me, hoh?" And Dr. Schwartz saw that he was not dealing with a pretty girl; his smile stiffened on his face, and he looked like a football player who has not gained an inch. "You better stay in bed for a few days," said the doctor, "or you may run the risk of pneumonia. I wouldn't fool around with a cold like that." But the young doctor was not enthusiastic now, and there was a definite dislike in him for Moses. He felt that Moses did not trust him a bit and he disliked Moses for it. But he was all smiles as he left Rebecca by the door, and by the time he was once more seated at the wheel of his roadster, the bedside manner had returned to him. The hands that turned the wheel were women's bedside hands, and the way Dr. Schwartz sat behind the wheel was the way a woman liked to see him.

When the boys came home for their evening meal, Moses insisted on sitting up in bed and asking them questions. How was business and did they sell any more suits? Did the shipment of hats come in from Kling Brothers? And when David said that there were a dozen hats missing from one of the boxes, Moses beat his pillow in a rage and said that David should right away take the bill of lading up with the express company and put in a claim. Towards eleven o'clock, everyone was in Moses' room, sitting about his bed, and Moses was telling them about the price of wool for the winter's trade. The bedroom was glaring with unshaded electric light, and the reflections of the globes showed in Moses' bright pupils. About the bed were Louis and David and Sol and Harry and Michael, and they were all talking loudly and arguing with one another and with their father. Now that he was sick they felt freer with their opinions, and they hurled their ideas at him, and he felt about their ideas and when they were painful to him he hurled them back and coughed. Louis said that it was time they looked

around for a bigger store and maybe thought of handling women's goods, and Moses answered that there was time enough for that; but now the Singermanns were known for their cheap prices on men's goods, and it would be hard to change around from one thing to another. Louis could not help feeling stronger in his ideas now, for he saw Moses in bed, Moses in his nightgown with a pillow behind his head. Louis still thought of beautiful things that might be created in connection with a store. He thought of glittering windows and women's fabrics in the subdued illumination of these windows. He thought of blue, purple, and scarlet silks, of Spanish shawls from Granada and small silver slippers; and he felt stronger in his thoughts when he saw Moses in bed, propped up against a pillow, the hair on his chest looking moist and weak with sickness.

And Louis said, suddenly, that Moses ought to draw up a will, because it was bad to leave a thing like that to the last minute. It was the proper procedure, he said, when a man got along in years and had a business. And God knew, if anything should happen, a will would be useful to have around, to show and to study. Rebecca cried out, "Shame to talk on such a thing now!" But the voices of her sons beat her protest down and tramped on her protest; but reasonably, David said that there was nothing wrong about drawing up a will when a man was sick. You never knew what was going to happen, said David, and looked mournful, the way he had looked when Maxine didn't come back to the hotel. Harry was of the opinion that a will should have been drawn up long ago, a will in which Moses said that he left so much to Rebecca and so much to his sons, and this part to this person and that part to that person. But Michael could not stand such talk about a sick bed, and felt suddenly ill with the glaring light and the smell of medicine. He rose out of his chair by the side of the bed and thought that he would go out and get a breath of fresh air. As he

reached the door, he heard Moses say, "Michael must go to school. He must go to college and learn things. There are many things in the world to know about; there are books and the ways of men and the tricks of business that a man must learn." And for that moment Michael loved his father and was surprised that he should feel so. But it was the mention of college, so unexpectedly, out of the murk and nausea and argument of the sick room that made him feel happy and love his father for a little bit, when he had never loved him before.

Moses had said that he wanted an alcohol rub, and there was a man who drove an express wagon and fitted glass into windows at odd times, who had been called in to do Moses this service. The man was Gershon Sheff, a fine looking fellow who came to the synagogue to pray without missing a single Sabbath eve. Moses and Gershon had struck up a friendship in the synagogue because they were both strong men and both had deep, fine voices. Moses had often thought when he talked to this Gershon Sheff that if he should ever be sick he would like Gershon Sheff to rub him down. Gershon's hands were so strong and finely tempered, the strong hands that looked kind to a man's aching muscles. And now Gershon came with a quart of alcohol and looked very humble and very kind in Moses' bedroom. He came from the express wagon and he smelled fresh and free of the streets and of horses. Moses softened and grew docile when he saw Gershon enter the room. "Welcome, Gershon," he said. "And did you have a busy day on your wagon?" And Gershon replied in Roumanian Yiddish, "It is sad to see you sick of bed, Brother Singermann, a man so strong and so charitable to poor people. If I had ever dreamed, Brother Singermann, that I should find you sick in your bed, I would have gone and knocked my head against a wall." "A-hoh!" sighed Moses. "Who can tell what tomor-

row brings? Today are we not happy and is not the great God good to us? But tomorrow all is sadness and we are stricken. Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God, the Lord is One."

So the Singermann brothers moved their chairs away from the bed to give Gershon Sheff room; and he washed his fine, strong hands until they were clean of the least particle of dirt. Then he removed the covers from Moses' bed and tenderly undid the buttons of Moses' nightgown until Moses was naked. He bade Moses lie on his stomach, and he poured alcohol from the bottle into the palms of his hands. He took off his shoes and stockings and got in the bed and rubbed the alcohol into the sick man's skin with all his strength, but with a specific kindness. And as he rubbed vigorously, Moses grunted with a kind of sensuous delight, and even the smart of the alcohol was a sort of sweetness to his body. When Michael came into the room again, the bed, the walls, and the lights were heavy with alcohol, but the smell was strong and vigorous and healthy. Michael saw how Gershon rubbed the sick man's back and thighs and chest with a warm and positive affection, and Michael felt that Gershon was a good man and that there were no dark corners, no clever curves in Gershon Sheff. But all of him was frank and honest and clean, and he had no thoughts but those of helpfulness. Michael saw how soft and beautiful was his father's skin and how it grew rosy under the force and vigor of the alcohol rub. And it was pleasant to see that Moses had such a fine body, because his face was dark and fierce and stern and did not seem to belong to that soft, rosy skin.

When Gershon had finished and was sweating from his exertions, he lifted Moses up and drew the nightgown over Moses' head and buttoned the gown as tenderly as a woman would button it. And he drew back the covers over Moses' body, and he said, "Now, rest, and I bet you tomorrow you'll

be a new man." But Moses did not want to sleep now; his skin was tingling and alive and he was tired of being a sick man. "You must sing a song, Gershon," said Moses. "Sing me a Roumanian song like I heard you that time at Rifke Handel's wedding." Gershon blushed over his frank, handsome face. "I should sing before such a musical family!" He laughed deprecatingly and shrugged his shoulders, great expressive shrugs that spoke a language of flesh and blood which words were pale to express. *"Zing,* Gershon!" called Rebecca. *"Vehst Roumanische lieder?* Don't be bashful on you!"

"Sure. All right." And Gershon sang in a deep, rolling baritone, so warm and many colored in its tones that Michael was embarrassed for its beauty,

If you see a pretty girl
Don't turn your back on her, sir!
But make her spin, and make her whirl
And give you many *kinder!*

Don't be so slow, don't be so nice!
Don't turn your back on her, sir!
But grab her tight, and kiss her twice
She'll give you plenty *kinder!*

Gershon clapped his hands together keeping time to the beat of the music, and he laughed all over his body as he sang. The song was not something he had studied and packed away in his brains. The song was inside him and flowed along with his blood; the song was a part of himself escaping in music. He was full of such songs that had been in him since he was a small child, but he could not remember first hearing them. They had become a part of him, and he had them in his blood and in his flesh and they kept time to the beat of his heart and they motivated his glances, his speech and gestures. When Gershon finished, Moses hummed the song over to himself, and he said that

he was feeling much better. It was a mistake to get in bed, but the best way to throw off your sickness was to work and talk and keep moving. For if you took your sickness to bed with you, it fed on your blood and grew fat at your expense. The room was very warm, sharp with the smell of flesh and alcohol, and everyone was animated and frisky. Moses said, "You must sing another song, Gershon, but a soft one, a sad one this time."

"*Zing,* Gershon," approved Rebecca. "All day have I heard sickness and groaning in this house, and it will do my heart good to hear music. It is not right that the rooms of my house should be filled with sickness, and a song will drive all ill away. Sing me a song of Roumania in the fall time, when the leaves are like fire and gold."

Gershon clasped his hands together, the fingers interlaced, the closely pressed palms seeming to imprison all the deep feeling of his body; and he sang,

> Across the river, the red fires are burning.
> Do you see the red fires, my beloved,
> Burning through the autumnal mist, across the river?
> They are like the fires in my heart,
> Fires that burn through the mist of my heart's weariness.
> O Beloved! Do not quench the red fires of my heart
> With the cold, dismal rain of your words!

As Gershon sang this song, Rebecca nodded her head up and down, taking the song's wistfulness and desire and melody into her and pressing its sadness to her heart. She remembered that this was the same song her father had sung when she was a girl; and she saw her father again, his finely poised slenderness, his eyes of a poet and his coal-black hair. She remembered how he had played the song on his violin, in the dimness of a room lit by only one lamp; and the wood of the violin had yearned and murmured in the lamp's reflection.

When Gershon had finished, he said that it was getting late, but that he would sing one more song, a merry one so that Moses would sleep well. And he sang a melody that told of a girl who went to a ball and started dancing with a very handsome officer. There was no such officer in the Roumanian army for looks, and all the girls in the village were pining away for him. And so this girl who was dancing with him now was called Sophie, and in the middle of the dance Sophie began to lose her petticoat. Every time her feet moved to the dance, her petticoat grew a bit looser and Sophie was filled with terror and she didn't know what to do. And at last she felt that she could not bear it any longer and she started to run from the ballroom, but before she reached the door, the petticoat fell to her ankles. Her feet were weighed down by the red petticoat, but quickly, she stepped free and was about to pick the petticoat up when a man's hand snatched it away from her. With tears of anguished humiliation running down her cheeks, Sophie fled through the doors without once looking back. And when she reached her home she wept many more tears and felt that the Roumanian officer would never care to see her again. She feared that he would make a joke of her and her petticoat. But a few days later, the officer sent her a note, and he said that he had the petticoat, and that he would return it to her if she would meet him in a certain secluded spot in the woods. So Sophie went to get the petticoat (it was her best petticoat) and besides, she was longing for another glimpse of the handsome officer. And she saw him in the woods, and he saw her; and he said that she must remove her dress and don the petticoat. Sophie blushed and giggled, but he said that he would die if he did not see her in her petticoat. So she removed her dress, but she did not put on her petticoat for a long time; and it was dark in the woods before Sophie put on her petticoat; and she was no longer a maiden. And here there was a pause in the song, and then

it went on gaily, telling the hearers that there was a happy ending. The officer, conscience stricken at what he had done, wed Sophie a few months later; and the bridal couple left the church under a bower of sabers. The song had a moral that said, Girls, do not despair! If you cannot get a man, lose your petticoat at the ball, and then meet your lover in the woods.

This song put the Singermanns in a boisterous humor. Sol laughed until his face was like a comic valentine pasted over his features. Even Rebecca thought it a funny song and laughed so that tears appeared in her eyes; but David said that he thought the song was a little coarse, and he was sure he didn't think it was so funny. It wasn't a song that a man should sing in front of ladies, anyhow.

"Come again, Gershon," said Moses to his friend. "You should not be a stranger in my house. Come again, and bring new songs and new music."

"Thank you, Brother Singermann," replied Gershon. "And the next time we meet, I pray God that you will be as strong as a soldier. It has been an honor for me to be under your roof. *Gite nacht, Moishe.*"

"Did you hear that song?" David asked Louis after Gershon had gone. "I'd call that song raw. I don't see anything so funny in it."

"It isn't what it says that's so funny," said Louis. "It's what it makes you think about. Can't you see that girl losing her petticoat in the middle of the ballroom? He's a sketch, that Gershon."

But David thought it a foolish song and said it gave him the pip, and it might be funny in the Old Country, but he couldn't see how Americans could laugh at a song like that. And so Louis and David argued back and forth about the song for a long time, Louis saying that it tickled him pink, and David saying that he didn't think it was much of a

song; and if it was funny then there must be something wrong with him.

The next morning, Moses thought that he would get out of bed. He stood on his feet, but the whole room swung about him crazily, and he could not walk to the door. He stumbled back to the bed and lay down upon it, groaning and weak. He began to cough until he felt that his chest would crack open, and he found it difficult to get breath into his lungs. There was a sharp, stitching pain on one side of his body, as though a red-hot needle were being drawn through his skin, a needle sewing his flesh with a thread of fire. If anything, he felt worse than the day before. *"Ech kann nisht offschtehen,"* he groaned. That doctor. What a fool!

Rebecca roused the boys and told them that Moses was very sick and that they would have to go to the store first. After they had gone, Susie put in another call for Dr. Schwartz, but it was an hour before he drove up in front of the house. He again felt his patient's pulse, took his temperature, wrote out another prescription and then departed. The sideboard in the bedroom was now crowded with bottles and boxes of pills from the drug store. There were capsules to take every half-hour, medicines to take in teaspoons and medicine to gargle. But as the day progressed, Moses grew steadily worse; and that evening when the sons returned, he showed little interest in what had transpired, and did not even ask what the day's sales had been.

Louis went in to see his father first; when he left the bedroom, his brow was troubled; and there was a tightly packed alarm squeezing itself out of his eyes, and out of the words that came from his mouth. "That Dr. Schwartz hasn't his mind on this case," he said to David, "writing prescriptions and filling the house with all kinds of foolish medicines. Papa has been taking so much junk into his sys-

tem that it's all mixed up in him, and the mixture isn't doing him a bit of good."

"We ought to get the best doctor in town to have a look at him," suggested David. "Do you hear the way he's breathing in there, all fast and choked? There's no health in a man that breathes that way. He's shot full of sickness."

Louis looked in the telephone book, found Dr. MacDonald's telephone number and worked the numbers of the automatic telephone while Rebecca looked on in fear. There was something dreadful about the way Louis's fingers moved the dial, pressing each number down and then letting it go back of itself. These numbers meant another doctor; they might mean life or death. So much power in a telephone!

So Louis was talking to Dr. MacDonald. "It's my father. . . . Would you come, if you please. . . . Yes, Singermann. . . . I'm sure you know us, doctor . . . S-I-N-G . . . yes, Singermann. . . .You'll be right over? Thank you, doctor. Good-by. . . . He said he'd be right over," said Louis turning away from the telephone. "Now we'll see a real doctor. He studied in Europe. He studied in one of the big universities over in Germany. He'll tell us what's ailing papa."

In the bedroom, Moses lay curiously quiet except for the harsh, labored breathing that ground itself out of his chest. His eyes were fastened on the ceiling, and long cords of meditation seemed to bind him to the bed. Unexpectedly, he asked that Louis bring him his prayer book. The request was startling; there was something awful about it. The whole house had turned strange and held that awful quality. Only last evening Gershon had been here, singing his songs, and the rooms had been rapid with gusto and laughter, and even Moses had had a gusto about him in his sickness. But now he lay troubled, with an awful detachment wrapping him away from the others. He had turned his thoughts within, and even his eyes did not look outward, but were

turned upon his secret self. He received the prayer book and began reading in Hebrew: *O God, I am sorely stricken; but in my pain let me not forget Thee. Thou art long-suffering and patient; and in Thy great mercy Thou wilt forgive the murmuring lips and the weary soul.* And for a page he read, the words having the colors of unfamiliar jewels as they tumbled from his mouth. His hand trembled and the book fell to the floor; but Louis picked it up and returned it to his father's hand. So Moses read on: *As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof knoweth it no more.*

Moses had closed the book when Dr. MacDonald came in, a lean, wiry Scotchman who seemed to know disease from afar off, to feel it at his fingers' tips. He knew the shadows that diseases cast, and measured these shadows and judged them accurately. So now, he bent over Moses and seemed to judge Moses in an instant and seemed to see all the past years of Moses' life before him. Dr. MacDonald was a silent man, rarely saying anything, and when he spoke his words were tart and crabbed with knowledge. After he had stayed with Moses for a few minutes he came out of the bedroom and said, "Your father has pneumonia, and I have very little hope for him." He drew on his topcoat and gloves, and measured and caressed the fingers of the gloves, saying, "I'll get a nurse down here as soon as I can." The Singermanns watched every movement of the doctor and felt the wisdom of his mind as a threat hanging over the house. "You should have called me before," he said irritably. "Don't you ever open the windows in this house?" He turned the knob of the front door and snapped, "I'll be back in the morning."

The rooms of the Singermann house had been casual, familiar rooms, to walk through and to sit in. There were rooms you talked in and said everything that came to your mind. But now each room was grimly in its place, and

there was a strangeness about everything. The house had suddenly grown conscious of sickness and the furniture smelled of pain and the walls were hard and set. Each sound was one that the sick man might hear and interpret; each word was spoken in at atmosphere of illness, of gravity. A house is a free and expansive place when it is well; many sounds are made, and many words spoken; and all disappear quickly and are forgotten. But a house contracts and grows solemn when it is sick; and each separate sound becomes detached and is imprisoned to sickness.

The nurse arrived, large-boned and bland; and she wore a white uniform that swished when she walked and gave off sounds of competence. She entered Moses' bedroom and he looked strangely at her and wrenched his eyes away from himself, seeing her with an incredible clarity. As she busied herself about the room, Moses did not take his eyes off her, but followed her every movement and saw every fold of her uniform plain, so that he could take each fold and study its lights and shadows and feel its texture. "No, you must not come in here," the nurse said softly when Louis opened the door. Rebecca stood on the threshold and was amazed at the change of everything. Before, this had been the room in which she and Moses had slept together. They had talked of many things in this room and had felt the intense familiarity of each other in that bed. For over thirty years, Rebecca had slept with that man who now lay so strange and quiet under the blankets; and when they had not slept together it was because of some casual interference, some inconvenience that slipped quickly from their minds. Rebecca was dazed at the awfulness of the room. She could not comprehend Moses so ill; he was not her husband, he was not the man who had slept with her in rapture, in irritation, and in pure indifference. He was a stranger who had moved into the bed, whose limbs she could not touch. She was so dazed, so stupefied, that she could feel neither

alarm nor grief; she could feel only a numbness, a mystification.

Moses saw Rebecca, and whispered, "Send for Joseph." And Louis knew now that Moses had not been thinking altogether aimless things. The thought of his oldest son had been in his mind, and the image of his oldest son had haunted him. So Louis left the house and sought out his oldest brother for the first time in years. Joseph opened the door and looked bewildered. "Hello, Louis. What's up?"

"It's papa. He's very sick and he asked for you. You'd better come."

Daisy came to the door. "What is it, Joe?" she asked. "Is something the matter?"

"Louis says that papa is very sick."

"What's the matter with him?" asked Daisy.

"He's never been so sick in all his life long," whispered Louis. "He's got pneumonia and Dr. MacDonald don't hold out much hope for him."

Daisy was quickly filled with an intense energy. Her sharp blue eyes sparkled and her lips trembled as though they could not possibly say all the things that were in her mind. Words of sickness filled her with agitation; she longed to soothe over pain with words out of books. She longed to blow out flames of fever with easy, soft words out of a black, leather book. "I'll come along with you, Joe," she said, scarcely able to contain her impatience. "I'll get my *Science and Health* and come along with you."

"Oh, you'd better not bring that book into the house," Louis called to her. "Papa would certainly take on terrible if you should show him that book. There's no telling what he'd do."

Joseph looked from Daisy to Louis, and it was plain that he did not know which side to take. Here, he had not spoken to his father in all these years, and first thing his wife had to bring that book along with her. "Don't bother about that,

Daisy," he pleaded. "You know how papa is. He might get mad and it wouldn't be good for him."

"How could this book be bad for anybody?" asked Daisy, and she held the book against her breast as though the volume were her own flesh and blood and to part with it would be like parting with a child, or something even closer than a child. "There is nothing in the book that could harm anybody," she said stubbornly.

"Well, come along then," muttered Joseph. "Only, I wouldn't show the book seeing as how papa never could stand for it."

The three of them left Joseph's house and started walking towards Granite Street. Daisy was bathed in a steam of words, and her advice kept boiling within her, eager to be spoken. She carried Health next to her breast, and she wanted to share that Health, to give it away to all who were ill. "There's nothing to fear," she said in a rush of words. "God is looking after your father. And God is good. Oh, if he would only let me get our practitioner to read to him. I could get Mrs. Weinstock on the telephone. There ain't a more noble woman in the world than that woman. Just to feel her presence in the room is to feel God close to you."

"Please, Daisy, control yourself, will you?" pleaded Joseph. "You ought to know that papa hasn't got any use for Scientists. What good will it do him if he ain't got any use for Science?"

"That's just it," she snapped. "He'd never be sick if he'd took it up years ago. Look at my father. He's a new man since he found out that God is love. I just wish you could see my father, Louis. Why, do you know that man had one foot in the grave . . . couldn't eat anything . . . his heart . . . until I interested him in Science. . . . We went to the Mother Church in Boston . . . beautiful. . . . Like I was known to them for years, they let me get on the platform, and I made a speech and read a poem. And here I was a

stranger living miles away. The beautiful Mother Church in Boston. . . ."

As they were passing a drug store, Joseph said, "Have you notified Rachel? You'd better get her on the phone, if he's so bad. Go on, Louis. You'd better telephone Anaconda and get Rachel and Sam over. Only don't scare her."

While Louis telephoned Rachel, Joseph and Daisy continued on their way. When Joseph saw the light burning on the Singermann porch, and the outlines of the house so clear, so familiar, he remembered all the days he had spent in that house, and he remembered when he had been very happy there, his heart light as a feather within him; and he remembered certain days when he had been sad and wretched and filled with a deep hatred for the house and all within it. Now, as the front fence loomed up before him, his mind went back to the time he had lived in the rear of the store on East Park Street; his mind reached back even further, to Minneapolis, to the peddler's wagon, and to the house on Sixth Street. Joseph trembled with the sound of his own footsteps in his ears; for he was coming close to his father again; and he could feel his father's touch, his father's breath. And all his life seemed but a few minutes, a rush and fury of wind passing by. He turned the doorknob and stood aside while Daisy entered before him. He followed her, and they were met by Rebecca.

Daisy rushed up to her mother-in-law and caught the older woman in her arms and kissed her with a loud grief; but Rebecca made no sign, no gesture to show that she even knew her daughter-in-law. She stared at Daisy as if the younger woman were someone outside of her experience. But when Joseph kissed his mother, he felt her deep within him, and he felt himself inside his mother; so that when she was released from her oldest son's embrace, Rebecca looked as though she had felt the incredible happiness of reunion and the immeasurable sorrow of age.

"Where is dear father?" asked Daisy. But Joseph said, "I'll go to him first. I guess maybe we'd better go slow. So I'll go in first and then you come."

"Well, if you say so," murmured Daisy, attempting to prolong her feeling of concern. Her concern was like so much taffy being manufactured on a machine; and she pulled and stretched at her concern, trying to make it as long and sweet and pretty as possible.

As Joseph approached his father's room, the nurse came out, and she stopped him; but he said, "I'm his oldest son and he sent for me." The nurse hesitated and frowned. "He ought not to be disturbed this time of night," she said coldly. "Well, go in then, but don't stay with him long. My goodness, there are quite a lot of you, aren't there?" she asked with a blunt sarcasm. "Seven, eight, nine?"

"Seven," said Joseph, afraid of her.

"Pop in then, but pop out as soon as you can. You realize that he is a very sick man?"

Joseph opened the door before him; and he saw that the room was in semi-darkness, for the nurse had placed a shade over the single light suspended from the ceiling. He saw the foot of the bed as intensely bright so that the lower part of his father's body was sharply outlined under the covers. Moses' face was in shadow and his features were soft and gentle in the dimness. But when the door had opened, the eyes had taken on a peculiar expression of embarrassment and shame; and it was as though Moses were playing that he was the naughty son and Joseph the stern father. Though Joseph could not quite explain that expression to himself, he felt its pathos; he wanted to weep, and he wanted to throw himself at the side of his father's bed. Only, Singermanns did not do things like that.

"You here, Joe? Bring up a chair and sit by me. You got a fine business now, I hear. The best trade in the block, they tell me. How was your last shipment of gloves from Denni-

son? They must be crazy, them people, putting out such cheap materials."

Joseph looked at his father's eyes, and he saw them holding out welcome and love, pitifully; two eyes, filled with innumerable pictures and all the scenes a man of action gets into himself through life. Joseph found it difficult to talk about Dennison's gloves with his father's eyes like that, brimming over with welcome and love. Just the same, Joseph couldn't help feeling interested when his father spoke that way, and he couldn't help replying, "Them Dennison people! You should have seen the leather gauntlets they sent me. I never had so many kicks."

"I told Harry to write them a letter. I said to Harry, write so: 'Gentlemen, your shipment of gloves received and in reply would state, What's come over you people?'" But Moses' voice was very low, and between words, he sought for breath, sharply. He pulled breath from the air and held it, but he tried to make out to Joseph that it was only a slight indisposition. Every time he spoke, he gasped for breath and held it grimly, and then his eyes said, Just a little sickness I'm ashamed of.

"And I wrote them a letter," affirmed Joseph, "and I said, 'For people what have been in business fifty years, like you claim to be, you certainly put out a poor grade of leather gauntlets.' I would have sent the whole shipment back, only I didn't have a gauntlet in the store, and I can't afford to lose trade." And then Joseph said, tenderly, "I guess you ain't feeling so well, papa."

"No. No, I ain't been feeling so well," confessed Moses, and looked deeply ashamed. "I guess I ain't as young as I used to be. Remember when I could carry a sack of potatoes on my shoulder? And I would come home and fix hay for the horse in the barn and still feel like I could go out to play, maybe, a game of pinochle or go to *Schule* and make plans for the holidays."

"It don't seem so long ago," mused Joseph. "Me and you riding in the wagon, in the streets of Minneapolis. Fine streets, pretty streets they have there, back east in Minneapolis."

"I see them before my eyes," whispered Moses. "And before that, I remember in Roumania when fall time came, and we picked the grapes to make wine. And one day I gave you a glass of wine, but you was only a baby, and it was bitter and you spit it out."

"I was too young to remember," said Joseph.

"And we did come over in the boat and you was so afraid when we landed in New York. And when we taked the train from New York to Minneapolis, you was so afraid, and you cried for your mama. Only you was a young boy then."

"It's so far back. I don't remember so far back."

"Well, you was my oldest son," gasped Moses. "You know, an oldest son—is—different—you know——"

"I'll get the nurse, papa. You'd better stop talking and I'll get the nurse."

Moses looked with his two eyes upon Joseph, and the oldest son did not rise, but moved his chair closer to the bed. And he took his father's hand, then let it go in embarrassment. They sat for a few minutes without talking, when there was a knock on the door and Daisy came in. She was breathless and trembling with excitement; and when she saw her father-in-law, she exclaimed, "Dear papa! I'm so sorry to see you like this. Oh, Joseph, your poor father! It's a bad time of the year to go out without taking precautions." She went over to Moses and kissed him on the forehead, but he did not look at her. "Dear papa, would you let me call in a friend of mine, a perfect angel of a woman? It's Mrs. Weinstock, papa, and she's done any number of people lots of good. She's like an angel."

"Vus is dus?" groaned Moses. "A Christian Sciencer?"

Daisy burst into tears. "Dear papa," she sobbed. "I

wouldn't hurt you for the world. Believe me, it's only for your own good I'm thinking. All the time we been separated, I been tearing out my heart. All the time I wanted to come here and see you and Mama Singermann. It was my pride stopped me. But, papa, please, if you'll only listen to me now. Just put yourself in my hands, and make believe you're well. Try and believe that Error can be stamped out."

"Ah, I don't want it," fretted Moses, and tossed his head from one side of the pillow to the other. "Take the book away! It's not for a Jew! Take the book away from me. Daisy! *Gott! Gott!* Joseph, tell—Daisy—the book—away!"

Joseph rose from his chair; and the nurse returned to see the old man running a temperature and the young people arguing. "Now! Now!—Now!" snapped the nurse. "A body can't even leave the patient for a few minutes. You're to leave the room at once." The nurse placed one arm against Joseph and one against Daisy and began pushing them from the room. "The idea," she said. "The idea."

"Will you take this book and read to my father?" pleaded Daisy. She tried to place the soft leather volume in the nurse's hand. "It's God's love," sobbed Daisy. "Don't put God out of this room."

"Oh, bother the book," muttered the nurse vexatiously. "I don't want any books around here." She succeeded in getting Joseph and Daisy out of the room and closed the door after them. "Books. Th! Th! I never heard of such a thing."

The nurse busied herself about the bed, smoothing the covers and cooling the man's forehead. She placed the thermometer in his mouth, read the temperature and wrote the numbers on the chart. The chart was carefully drawn, and the numbers were clear and it was all efficient. With her gleaming, sharp pencil, the nurse kept a meticulous record of all that transpired, and she was very proud of the chart and fondled it and caressed the sheet on the board.

"My son," gasped Moses. "Joseph——"

"Don't speak, Mr. Singermann," she said kindly. "You want to get better, don't you? Yes. Of course you do. Close your eyes."

He fretted and tossed, and then began to sob. "Joseph! . . . Michael! . . . Send for Michael. . . . You bad woman! Get out of my room, you bad woman! Rebecca, Joseph!"

"Ah—h. Ah—h," murmured the nurse. "Ah—hhhh. Lie still."

"Front!" cried Moses. "Joseph, David, front! Wool. It's wool. I tell you. *Adenoi Elehenu, Adenoi Echod!"* He began to babble in Hebrew and the nurse injected morphine. He was quiet after that.

"Well," said the nurse to Dr. MacDonald next morning, "I had a time of it, I can tell you. And now he wants ice-cream, doctor. He's been pestering me for ice-cream."

"No harm in that," snapped the wiry Scotch doctor. "Send one of the boys for it." He turned about and saw Michael staring at him. "Son, run to the corner and get your father a pint of ice-cream."

Michael had often gone for ice-cream. It was quite a treat on hot summer nights. Rebecca would say, *"Vist* ice-cream. *Geh tsum* droog store and buy ice-cream." And Michael would be very glad, especially when he was younger. He would bring the ice-cream, and his mother would empty the cream into small plates, so much for each person; and when there were only himself and his mother, Michael liked it best; but when there were others, he did not get so much and he would look longingly at the other plates. So it was strange that he should go for ice-cream now when they had told him that his father was dying and would not last the day. It was so different from the other times when his mother had brought the plates, so much for himself, so much for the company. Or if he and his mother were alone, she always put more on his plate, almost twice as much as she

took herself. If he protested, share and share alike, she would say, "It's so cold, it gives me a headache."

This time it was not the same, and he wondered why his father, who was dying, should want ice-cream. Seems like he would want deep things, things of the mind and of the soul. Seems like he would not want food that can be eaten, but only deep, profound thoughts, and memories. But Michael bought the ice-cream as he had been told to do, and all the way home there were tears in his eyes, not so much because he was sorry that his father was dying, but because he knew that death was such a significant happening, changing all, changing the days and the nights forever. People stopped Michael, and asked, "How is your father getting along? And so sudden, too. Saw him only a few days ago and nothin' the matter with him, like." But Michael could only answer his questioners with those tears in his eyes, those tears that saw death as a great scythe, sharp of blade, a vast moving scythe that cut down the days and the nights forever.

He brought in the ice-cream, but it seemed as though Moses had forgotten that he had ever wanted it. The nurse brought the ice-cream into his room, but Moses only looked at her with glazed eyes, and it was plain that he was not altogether in this world any longer. There was a part of him that was gone, that part of him under the glaze of his eyes was gone, forever. There seemed to be a crowd of people in the room. Rachel had arrived, accompanied by Sam; and Michael saw that his sister was as calm and beautiful as ever; and he was reassured and soothed by her presence. He remembered that Rachel had looked upon death before; Moses was as a tree falling in the forest; but Gloria had been a flower with petals drifting away in the wind.

The Singerman brothers had brought young Billy Clymer, a lawyer, to draw up a will; now they were all standing

about the bedside of Moses; and Billy Clymer had a sheet of paper in his hand upon which he jotted down what should go to this one and what to that. Moses could hear all that was said, but he could not speak plainly. He nodded his head when he wanted to affirm something, or shook it sideways when he was dissatisfied. Michael was depressed and angry at the whole proceedings. This was not a time to talk of money and merchandise. Why did they not leave the dying man to make his peace with God, instead of prodding him to leave so much and so much to this one and to the other? Michael trembled with mortification. How stupid, how ludicrous life can be in comparison with death! And yet Death does not care; he stands over in one corner intently watching the farce, only waiting his chance to obliterate it, in the half of a heartbeat. "And you say that Rebecca shall have . . . And Louis shall divide with David . . . The money in the bank . . . The store is shared between . . . So much for Sol. . . . The interest on the savings. . . . An accounting shall be made. . . . The stock is worth . . ." Then Moses lifted himself slightly off his pillow and lifted an arm. The lawyer bent over and listened. "You have a gold watch, and it is not going now, but Joseph shall have it repaired and keep to remember you by." Moses nodded and looked from one face to another. "Michael," he whispered. "What about Michael?" asked clever young Billy Clymer, leaning forward, his fountain pen suspended in mid-air. "College," whispered Moses. "Ah, very good," said the lawyer, and directed a glance in Michael's direction that seemed to say, Pretty lucky for you, my boy. Pretty lucky. The will was drawn, and the lawyer passed the pen into Moses' hand for a signature. The nurse held the dying man by the shoulders, and the signature began strongly and with pride, but ended in a blot. "No matter," said the lawyer. "We got what we wanted. Everything is down in black and white, and nothing can be changed. Everything is here, so much for

one, so much for another." But Moses had forgotten about his will and lay tensely against the pillows.

The children seated themselves about the table in the dining room, and waited for the doctor to call them in for the end. Joseph was seated at the head of the table, lifting his chair up and down, nervously, with the weight of his back. Backward, forward, the chair was on its two rear legs, now on all four. Daisy was reading from *Science and Health,* her sharp, blue eyes like magnets, lifting the words off the pages, holding them suspended, dropping them again. Rachel sat quiet and lonely across from her sister-in-law, and she looked straight before her, but she was seeing other places, other times. In this house her first child had been born, had died, and in this very room the child had reposed in a white coffin. Louis sat by the side of his sister and he was drawing lines and heads on a pad he held in his hand. The drawings enlarged before his eyes and were paintings he might have created. David supported his head between his hands, his eyes on the tablecloth, and he was perfectly still. Where was Maxine now? Harry sat back stiffly in his chair, his eyes entranced by the electric globes above his head. "What are we waiting for?" he asked suddenly in a loud voice. "Sh!" the other answered. "Not so loud." Harry laughed harshly, and his laughter was like the explosion of a charged weapon. Sol was stolid, impregnable, scarred by many blows. He might have been sitting in a prizering waiting for the bell. Only Michael was weeping. He did not know why, unless it was that death to him was a gleaming, terrible scythe, cutting down the days and nights forever.

An errand boy arrived from the drug store carrying oxygen tanks. The nurse carried them into the bedroom and shut the door after her. The boy from the drug store looked at the Singermanns, gaped at them and swallowed them into his mouth. Suddenly, Rebecca came into the room and looked

at her children as if they had materialized out of Limbo. She had been in her room, lying down, but she could not get the mystification, the daze out of her eyes. She could not comprehend the approach of death. Moses had always been too strong and too stern; and now that he was dying, the fact could not penetrate her mind. Rachel saw her mother and helped the older woman into a chair. "How are you feeling, mama?" But Rebecca only sighed deeply and made no answer. A wall clock, placed at one end of the room, struck back and forth, the pendulum growing larger and more terrible until it swung across the room, across the house, across the whole town, back and forth, back and forth. The hours passed from morn to noon, from noon to twilight, and the pendulum peeled off slices of the hours with an awesome, relentless rhythm.

Darkness closed in, and Joseph rose to lower the window shade. At the same time, the nurse emerged from the sick room and said that Moses wished to speak with Michael. The youngest member of the family sat icy cold in his place and could not move. The pendulum of the clock swung back and forth through him, and he was paralyzed. "Michael," snapped Joseph. "Did you hear? Your father is calling you." But Michael could not move. He was frozen in terror and he saw death beckoning to him. Joseph lifted his youngest brother out of the chair, and led him into the sick room where Michael saw his father breathing harshly on the bed. What was it his father wished to say to him? For a moment, Moses opened his eyes and saw his son. Then his eyeballs floated and circled away and Moses was elsewhere. "Let me go, let me go," muttered Michael, and freed himself from Joseph's grasp and ran out of the room, out of the house. He could not bear to watch his father dying, not because he had loved that man in the bed, but because he saw Death advancing as an army advances, taking one position,

then another and another, until Life was in full retreat, and Death was capturing all the places of light and movement and beauty. No sooner was Michael out of the house then he felt freer and was relieved of his terror. He was free of the sick smells and the enormous weight of the pendulum, cutting with its sharp edges, the heart and substance out of life.

After a period of delirium, Moses was conscious, and he was in possession of his faculties, so that he could say *veedoo,* the prayer of a dying man. *Into Thy hand I commit my spirit; if it be Thy will that I sink now into eternal sleep, redeem my soul and lead me unto life everlasting. Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God, the Lord is One.* But Moses went on and on, even after he had finished *veedoo.* His words jostled one another, rapidly; he said the same prayers over and over again, and his children could hear him, and they listened without movement and with rapt eyes. He rambled on, and some words were so low that no one could hear them, but at times they rose high like blazing rockets penetrating through a mist. He had started praying at the top of his faculties; but gradually he descended into detached phrases and mumblings that had no connection with *veedoo,* or for that matter, with anything at all. Now he was in the synagogue praying; now he had commenced a tune; now he was arguing with a customer in the store. And now he was in Roumania drinking wine with old friends, and now he was in Minneapolis, driving his wagon through the streets, crying, "Straw-berr-ries! Fresh straw-berrr-ries!" There was a time in his delirium when he was resting under a tree near a river, and he could see the boats making an ecstasy of foam and spume, the boats on their way south to New Orleans. And there were times when he was scolding his sons, calling them obscene names in Yiddish. But above the words, the delirium, his children could hear the unalterable

swinging of the pendulum, across the room, across the roofs of houses, across the mountains.

Dr. MacDonald came out to say that nothing, now, could be done. His patient was dying, but peacefully dying, and did not know it, but was somewhere in his mind where no one could follow. There was no pain, said the doctor. There was no contact with pain, but only slow death and peaceful release. So the children of the man, his daughter-in-law, his wife, came into the room and looked upon him. His breath was slow and like the subdued rattling of chains along a street. But his face was calm and not unhappy, and he looked as though he were falling asleep on any usual night, on any night of the past years when he had been strong and wholesome. They looked down upon him and wondered how a man who had been so thoroughly a part of life could now slip away with so little resistance and with such a composed manner. Where was he now, where was he going now that he should be so peaceful, so unconcerned? Beside what river did he stand, what dark, slow river, far away and far away? In what wide plain did he stand under the dark sky, in the dark heart of mystery, afar off, a long distance afar? The chains moved more slowly, rattled less distinctly as though the road had grown softer. Where was he now, how far away, between what places, how many miles, how long a distance over land and over sea? The chain rattled up and stayed for a long time, then rattled down and stayed for a long, long time. The chain moved up slowly, and hung tight, and parted suddenly and broke. The body quivered, but the face was quite calm and really robbed of concern. There was even a slight smile with something sardonic in it. "He's dead," said the doctor.

They stood about him as they had stood when he was alive. That was strange. They had come into the room and watched him when he was alive, and now he was dead, and they still watched him. He was here a second ago. He is not

here now. How many men have died since the beginning of the world and where did they go and where are they now? Where are the men who died a thousand years ago and where are the men who died only yesterday? And where do they go and what do they do and what do they think? You take a man, a working man, a vital man. And he moves here and there, always vivid and alive and strenuous. And then he goes to bed and rattles a chain away. How many men have died since the beginning of the world, and some in France and some in Spain and some in Africa? And where do they go and what do they do and what do they think?

Now Rebecca was startled out of her mystification and screamed and beat her breast and howled like a wild animal. Her children held her, but she battled them and was like a mad woman screaming and tormenting herself. These last few days of Moses' illness, she had moved about as a sleepwalker; and now she was awakened, and as they dragged her from the room, she was somehow incredible, her bewilderment electrified into madness; and no one could tell how this sudden thing had happened to her. Was she thinking of all the nights she had slept with him, in rapture, in irritation, and in pure indifference? Her children felt a deep pity for her madness, and wept for her madness as they supported her into another room and laid her down upon her bed. The doctor came and gave her a sleeping draught, and she moaned softly into slumber. When she became conscious once more she would remember her first wild grief; she would scream and torment herself, but less wildly; and less so, and less so, from hour to hour and day to day.

When Michael returned to the house, his father had been dead for an hour, and the undertaker had arrived to wash the body and measure it for a coffin. Rabbi Lachter was there and had brought a pillow filled with sacred earth from

Jerusalem, and the pillow had been placed under Moses' head. The rabbi walked from room to room, consoling the family, bending over each member of the family and breathing consolation into ears attuned to grief. His beard was still more red than white, and he made the same high-pitched cackling noises when he spoke. No matter what the occasion might be, birth, circumcision, marriage, confirmation, a kaffee-klatch or a death, Rabbi Lachter was conspicuous in the assembled throng, his read beard burning a colorful benediction over his flock. Michael remembered the many times he had gone to the rabbi's shop on South Main Street to have chickens killed for the Sabbath; and he remembered how the rabbi had taken each chicken and cut its throat with a fine-bladed knife that he had produced from some unseen pocket in his long, rusty-black *kaftan*. Many had been born and many had died since the rabbi first came to Silver Bow; new and Americanized faces appeared in the synagogue; but the rabbi was indestructible, a tradition in the town, a fragment of his faith's immortality.

A black crape had been hung on the Singermann door. When people passed the house, they looked intently at the crape; and some stopped to gossip about it, shaking their heads sadly; but others only glanced at the door and hurried on as though in fear. Doors are most puzzling things, and it is hard to say what lies behind the door of a big house or of a small. But a crape on the door sets a house apart from all the other houses in the block. The door grieves, the windows are sad eyes, the shingles on the roof look wan and mournful. Put a crape on the door and there is a strangeness within, and a mystery unfathomable to the end of all time. Sometimes the breeze swings down the street and makes laughter in some of the houses, but it blows the crape with a melancholy eeriness and makes the rafters sob.

They brought a large coffin into the house, large and white with nickel-plated handles that gleamed brightly; and

Moses was placed within, a sheet covering his body. The coffin was carried into the front parlor and candles were placed at the head and at the feet. Now they were tall and gave off long, placid arrow-heads of flame; but in the morning they would have melted down and the flames would be weak and sputtering as a man's breath near extinction.

Michael entered the room timidly and looked at his father and saw how free of concern was the face. Only there was that slightly sardonic smile upon it; and Michael wondered what his father could have been thinking or dreaming when the world moved away from him. The smile had not been there when Moses was alive, but had appeared after the last breath had been drawn. It was the dying that was terrible, then. Death, itself, was soft and still and faintly amused. Michael was no longer terrified to look upon his father. Moses seemed quite content. He could burn with all his old irony, and still be aloof and at peace. And there was no need of weeping here and little use for tears and lamentations. The dead man's smile sneered at grief. How wise are the dead! And yet their wisdom is forever concealed within themselves, and the living must remain ignorant of the tiniest fragment of that immortal wisdom.

The brothers were grouped about the coffin and they whispered tales of their father, and told stories about him, discovering depths and channels of wisdom and resource and strength they had not realized before. "And he could fight a man twice as big as himself," whispered Sol proudly. "Remember the time when he beat up that Serbian who wanted to jew him down on the price of a suit of clothes? Twice as big as papa that Serbian was, but papa raced into him and knocked him all over the floor. His muscle was in his shoulders, and there was no fat on him, except maybe a little around the waist," said Sol.

"Ah, you mustn't talk like that of a dead man," whispered

Rebecca. "You mustn't say such things of your father who is dead."

"Over thirty when he came to this country," said Joseph, "but that didn't bother him none. How many men can start all over again after they're thirty and when they don't know the language and customs of the country? You'd think a man would be all at sea, but not papa. Right away he was an American, and I remember times on the peddler's wagon in Minneapolis when he sold out a whole load of potatoes in five minutes, and with a good profit."

"And I remember days when he sang in the synagogue," said Louis. "Maybe if he'd trained his voice he might have been a great singer like Caruso, or maybe Chaliapin. I remember in the synagogue, his deep voice and the rich colors of his voice. And a man who could sing like that might have been an artist."

"All muscle," said Sol. "Not an ounce of fat in him, or maybe just a little around the waist."

"Ah! Ah! Such talk," sobbed Rebecca. "It is a sin to talk of such things now with him lying there dead."

"Boys, please," said Rachel. "Talk more softly, more softly."

"He wasn't such a very good business man," said Harry, "but he never quit trying. He put things through by will. Men like that who aren't so wise, but have a will, get things done. Napoleon was like that. Retreating from Moscow in the dead of winter with all his men dying around him. He had the will to put things through, and papa was something like that. Only, he wasn't a good business man."

"For shame!" sobbed Rebecca. "You should say such things and him not yet cold."

David began to cry like a little boy, and held his hands over his eyes in a vain attempt to stop the tears. "He wasn't a bad old man," wept David. "There was many times when he treated me better than I deserved. And that time

I joined the Elks, he was so glad. And he was so good to Maxine."

"She killed him!" cried Rebecca. "That bad woman killed him!"

"Mama . . ." sighed Rachel. "Boys . . ."

"He used to love to read," said Michael. "Remember, when he came home and read stories from the Hebrew newspapers? That showed he had imagination, because he read those stories out of the Hebrew newspapers."

"I take after him," said Sol. "He was a fighter. All the rest of you lay down. But he was strong, an' he never quit. I'm like that."

But Joseph said that Moses was a fine business man and had taught him many thing about buying and selling, things that had come in handy; and the others joined in, saying that Moses was this and that, discovering many fine qualities in the man they had not realized before. They felt along his strength and along his wisdom and did not disturb many qualities they had not liked about him.

They stood about their father's coffin for a long time, until the flames of the candles threw the black shadows of death on the opposite wall. And when their talk was finished, they looked at their father, yearning towards him, asking forgiveness for the many worries they had caused him; but he only looked back with his slightly sardonic smile.

Before the funeral started, next day, Gershon Sheff, the expressman came; and he was handsome to see, large in every bone and smelling of the outdoors, of the express wagon and the horses; but there was a puzzled look in Gershon's eyes. "Only two nights ago," he said, "I rubbed him down. Can you tell me that a man like Moses Singermann, alive two nights ago, can be dead now?" Gershon shook his head and regarded his heavy, large work shoes with a grieved concentration. Then he walked about, from

one mourner to another, saying, "Would you believe it? Two nights ago I came and rubbed him down with alcohol, and now *er ligt toit*. I cannot mine own eyes understand. What is this? 'Gershon,' he said to me, 'sing a song.' And we was all laughing, the boys, the mama, and even *der toiter,* the dead one." And Gershon looked upon the face in the coffin and grew more distraught and bewildered, his bewilderment colored and toned by a profound sadness. "Only two nights ago," he mumbled. "Can such things be?"

There were fifteen carriages that followed the hearse to the cemetery. It was such a long funeral that the street cars, running along Granite Street, stopped to let the procession roll past. Men and women stopped along the sidewalks to watch and nudge one another. "Not old Singermann? No! Not the old man? Why, I saw him only last week. He sold me this hat I got on." Some were miners who worked in the Caledonia, Leonard, and Never Sweat Mines. And some were just lousy Bohunks who worked on the railroads, the railroads.

The carriages moved slowly through the town, but when they reached the road that led out to the cemetery the drivers whipped up their horses and the funeral moved swiftly. Michael looked out of his soft, mournfully comfortable carriage at the dreariness of the Flats. He remembered when he had motored down this road with Maxine. He remembered how Maxine had accelerated the speed as she moved past the cemeteries, afraid to look upon the tombstones of the dead. She was made for life, crazy and voluptuous life, and it gave her the shivers when she passed the cemeteries. And now she was somewhere in California, snatching at the sun, taking the sun and holding it to her breasts, her heart. She was somewhere near a green sea; she was running along a golden shore, and her footprints were quickly obliterated by the restless tide. And perhaps Maxine would never

know of David in this carriage riding behind his father's hearse on the way to the cemetery.

Joseph and Rachel, who were in the first carriage with their mother, helped her down, and led her to the open hole that awaited Moses Singermann. Rachel had hoped that she would never come back here, to this dismal place where her first child lay buried. She remembered Boris, all these years gone, and perhaps he was living with another woman now; or it might be that he had no woman, but only the tapestry that he used to cover himself with, his immortal woman, his woman who demanded nothing. It would be better if Boris were dead, and away up in the mountains, under the tall pines with his child. For the child was not here, buried here in one of these black holes.

A gray mist rose over the mounds and tombstones, and mingled with the darker gray of smelter smoke. Rebecca looked small and unreal in her heavy black clothes, and this did not seem a proper place for her, this cemetery in Silver Bow. There was a deep, penetrating smell of earth that mingled with the smell of industry, of smelter smoke and metals in the furnace. The women wept, and sometimes their weeping was near and filled with desperation, and sometimes the wind blew the weeping away and it was remote. The weeping was with the wind; the wind was the messenger that bore the grief from one mourner to another. The gravediggers struggled with the coffin, lowering it into the excavation, and the wind came up of a sudden, and the grief was lamentable in the ears. The rabbi prayed. He gave a book to Michael and showed Michael where to read. *Lord, who shall sojourn in Thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell upon Thy holy mountain?* Michael read first in a shrill, uncertain voice, and then the words were deep in his consciousness, and his voice became older and firmer. *As he gave unto me the crown of a good name, may I, in leaving this hallowed spot resolve to keep pure that good*

name and cherish it more than the most precious of earthly treasures. Amen. But what did it mean? Michael read these words and felt them deeply, but he remembered his father's sardonic smile, and he wondered if his father heard these words, so many of them: Words, like pallbearers, following after a corpse; words that smell of prayer books and varnished benches in the synagogue. But the wind blew along the aisles of tombstones and carried the words away. Michael read on, but the words were scattered and were lost in the gray November afternoon.

When the carriages turned away from the cemetery, they were different and the spaces between one carriage and another were unequal. Before, Michael had been in a funeral carriage, straight and nervous with the sobriety of the occasion; but now it was just a carriage with deep leather seats and sides, very soft and sleepy. He relaxed into the softness and thought it was agreeable to be riding in a warm carriage on a November day. Now that the funeral was over, the interior of the carriage was soft to the senses, and it wasn't wrong to feel sleepy and drowsily comfortable. In the town, some of the carriages left the line, and there were only a few that returned to the house where the man had died. The street cars did not wait now, but cut in between the carriages, and the motormen clanged their bells impatiently. When his carriage drew up in front of the house, Michael was sorry to leave the soft leather seat. It had been so warm and comfortable within, and it was so cold and sharp outside.

The house was different again. It was not the house in which Moses had been sick, and it was not the house in which he had lain in his coffin. It was not even the house in which Moses had been well, drinking beer and wine and talking and making fire in the kitchen stove. But now it was an after-death house; and in the bedroom where Moses had been sick, the nurse was burning sulphur in cans. "Oh, yes," said the nurse. "Must have it. Orders of the Health Depart-

ment. Very contagious, you know." The house had a cinderous, slightly metallic smell of sulphur. And for days after, whenever Michael entered the house, he thought of his father because he smelled the sulphur, sharp in corners, in unexpected places.

FIFTEEN: WHAT TAWDRINESS, WHAT MAJESTY, WHAT ROMANCE?

Moses Singermann had been in his grave six months when Michael graduated from High School. June was timid and cool; the peaks of the mountains were white with snow. Winter left Silver Bow reluctantly and did not disappear in a day; he took his time, climbing the mountains slowly, looking back over his shoulder before he resumed his ascent. He reached the mountain tops in May and lingered there, watching the town beneath him. He scowled, shook his fists, and made a great show and bluster of his waning strength. Now, in June, he had disappeared over the summits, but the fringes of his white cloak trailed after him. When you looked toward the horizon and saw the perennial snow, you were always reminded that summer had a short lease here. Sometimes, in the dry heat of July and August, you saw the snow and you were soothed and cool; you were glad of winter refusing to quit the mountains, peering over the peaks with his white eyes, spying on summer. You admired the cool fellow away up there who, in the face of the sun, refused to give up his cold, immortal dignity.

When Michael first donned long trousers he thought that he could command all his actions and arrange his days like an army corps; but now he knew that his first long trousers had been a mere outward coming of age. With his High School diploma, he felt an inner, more assured maturity; and he walked about with that maturity and was friendly with it. His long trousers had called his physical self to manhood; but now his mind was growing up and growing

away, out of Silver Bow, beyond the mountains. He could look back now, and that was thrilling. He could see himself in the past, stepping from one age to another. He could think back to his first day in school and pity his childish ignorance. He could remember how he had longed for Donald Forbes, and even now there was a wistfulness mixed up in that longing, like long grass in a lonely place, bending and rolling in the breeze. When you were old enough to look back, you felt sorry for the child you once were, but mixed up with that sorrow was a vague regret. You could never be that young again. Not in this world could you ever reach back to the peculiar and somehow beautiful child you once had been. You played Pump-pump-pull-away-if-you-don't-come-I'll-pull-you-away, and that had been a care-free game to play of a summer's evening with the playmates you once had known. But you could never play that game again, not in this world.

Graduating from grammar school was a coming-of-age, and entering High School, you were quite old then, and your instructors addressed you, "Singermann." When you went to your first girl Down the Line and found passion and lust, that was a coming-of-age. It made you old in a night, and the next morning you were old, and the sound of your footsteps was knowing and grown-up. Your whole life long was a coming-of-age, but perhaps when you got to be thirty you knew everything and had seen all there is to see. Was there further age after that? After that, did every casual thing you saw and experienced mean a further maturity and coming-of-age? Michael thought, When I have a child, then probably I will be very old, and there will be nothing more to know when I look into the eyes of my first child. And thinking of these matters, Michael could not help wondering if a man ever did come of age. For there were so many things in this world to know and to see, life wasn't half long enough, and at eighty you might still be innocent and im-

mature. A turtle must be wise, living so long; an elephant must be very wise. Michael had heard that alligators live to incredible ages. Could men be that wise, could men have seen all the things a turtle, an elephant, and an alligator had seen?

A month before Michael was to leave Silver Bow for Chicago, there was a fire in Joseph's store. Michael was awakened at four o'clock in the morning by the clamor of the telephone, and he could hear Louis talking excitedly. He jumped out of bed, clothed himself hurriedly and accompanied Louis downtown. When they reached East Park Street, they could see the fire teams drawn up in front of Joseph's business, and the firemen were breaking in the front door. Joseph came running up, pale and wild. He trembled with anxiety and grief, and when Louis asked, "How much insurance have you got?" Joseph answered, "I don't know. Daisy takes charge of that." Michael followed Joseph into the store, but they could see no flames, though the place was heavy with smoke. The fire was in the basement; it was soon extinguished, but swirls of water ran down the aisles; and much of the merchandise was ruined. Michael could not get down into the basement, but Joseph put on hip-boots and went down, and Michael could see him lifting heavy loads of merchandise in his arms and carrying the goods to the bottom of the stairs. Michael, David, and Louis helped to carry the merchandise up the stairs where it was dry.

Joseph did not think about himself, his health or his clothes, and splashed up and down the aisles until his whole body was soaking wet. He carried pans, overalls, shoes, underwear to the bottom of the stairs where his brothers waited to relieve him of his burdens. Daisy arrived and saw what her husband was doing. "You fool!" she cried. "Leave the goods alone. Leave everything be until the insurance man

comes. How do you expect to collect anything, you fool?"

"But all my goods will be ruined!" Joseph cried up to her. "Do you think I can stand here and see all my merchandise soaked through?" "You damn fool," muttered Daisy, and her anger was so intense, so deep within her that she could hardly get the words out of her mouth. She made the Singermann brothers carry the wet merchandise down the stairs again, and Joseph had to put every article back where he had found it. Michael watched him splashing and struggling knee-high in the water, and he saw how his oldest brother carried the merchandise high, as though he feared the goods would be ruined. He saw how Joseph clutched the shirts, the overalls, the bundles of socks close to his breast, as though hugging the merchandise into his heart, his veins. Daisy called instructions from her dry refuge at the top of the stairs, and she was saying, over and over again, "The goods are fully insured, and that damn fool husband of mine wants to ruin everything. It ain't bad enough, maybe, that the merchandise is spoiled, that wise guy wants to lose every cent of insurance. You'd think them goods was human beings."

"Ruined! My whole winter shipment of underwear is ruined!" cried Joseph, and removed one of the wet undershirts from its box and felt along it and put it to his face. "The pants are soaking wet," he sobbed. "The overcoats are full of smoke."

"The man is crazy," muttered Daisy, turning to Michael. "Did you ever see such a man as that brother of yours? Look at him catching pneumonia in that water like if he had six kids to save from drowning. Joe! Joe Singermann! Come up here, you fool, and leave the goods be. The stock is fully insured, and we'll have a big fire sale."

"Ruined!" cried Joseph, coming up the stairs, his face pale and running dirty water, his feet sopping in his boots.

"Did you see the shoes? They'll all be cracked, and they was the finest looking shoes I ever had in stock. It was a pleasure just to look at them, the leather thick and soft and the soles so strong. I would have asked a big price for those shoes and not have cared a damn if I never sold them. They was staples, as good as sugar." Joseph wrenched off his boots, and gallons of water poured out of them; and it was amazing to think that he had sloshed about the basement with all that water freezing his legs. He was shivering all over his slender, tightly-knit body; his face was very pale, but his eyes were melting with grief. "It ain't the money I care so much about," he said. "But I hate to lose goods that I get used to having around, under my hands to touch, under my eyes to look at."

"And I tell you, Joe Singermann, you're a big fool," snapped Daisy. "If you leave the goods as they are, the insurance man will see the damage and pay up. Do you think goods is better than money?"

"No, I don't, and yes, I do," answered Joseph, his eyes running wet, but whether from smoke or emotion, it was hard to say. "I can't bear to see merchandise ruined. I tell you frank and plain. It ain't in me to stand by and see goods ruined, goods under my hands and for my eyes to see."

The firemen drove away, and the representative for the insurance company arrived. He saw the damage and drew up a report, a very fair report, Daisy said. But it was scarce dawn when Joseph had on his boots again and was down in the basement, pumping up the water and setting his ruined merchandise to rights. He removed shoes from their cartons and dried them, and spread out the comforters and blankets over the counters. "Smoke and water," he mourned, "they ruin merchandise. They take the life and color out of the best fabrics. It's a shame. It breaks a man's heart just to look at these things now, and to remember what they were before the fire and smoke got to them."

Michael was packing his trunk with things he would need at college, and he was impatient for the day to arrive when he could start on his way. There came a letter from Rachel asking him to come to Anaconda and stay with her for a week, because it would be a long time before she would see him again. Michael was very fond of his only sister, and he remembered what companions they were when he was a child; only he did not see so much of her nowadays, since she had been married to Sam Straller.

Rachel had two young ones now, a boy of four and a girl of a year. She was at the station in a Dodge car that Sam had bought only a few weeks ago, and she had the little boy with her in the front seat. Rachel kissed her brother and made him sit beside her and hold the little boy in his lap. Then she started the engine and backed out of the station yard and drove competently to her house on Locust Street. Anaconda was a much prettier town than Silver Bow. The early settlers had planted trees, and now they were great with many branches and formed green rafters over the streets.

Michael could see when he stepped into the house that Sam was doing very well. The furniture was expensive and tasteful, and there was a grand piano with framed photographs on top of it. There was a large photograph of Rachel and Sam in their wedding clothes, and there were pictures of the babies naked and lying on their stomachs. There were photographs of everyone in the Singermann family, and there was a handsome photograph of Daisy that had been taken by a theatrical photographer in Kansas City when she had been there to buy trunks and suitcases wholesale. But there was nowhere in the house a hint of Boris Romanovitch or of the first child, the one that Rachel had carried under her heart.

When Sam came home that first evening, Michael could see that he retained many of his old habits. He was still

brisk and energetic in his movements, hopping all over the house, making gurgling noises when he washed up in the bathroom and drying himself in every room. He had grown heavier, and his small mustache had an air of assurance now. But he still sucked his teeth and rushed his words as though he could not get them out fast enough.

"Young man," he said to Michael that evening after supper, "I only wish I had your opportunities when I was your age. Now take a man like me," he said, settling himself in an armchair and sucking a small white candy in his mouth that gave off a sharp mint odor. "I'm making money, bought a car—did you see my car?—belong to a couple of lodges and they're an expense. But a man has got to belong to a couple good lodges in a small town. It gives him authority. Not a half-dozen lodges. A couple good lodges that give a man standing. All the same, I wish I'd gone to college. It ain't so much what you learn. It's the background. It gives a man a culture. And that's a whole lot in life—culture. Profits? All right and good. But I'd like to be able to make a speech, to talk with the biggest men as their equals. I'd like to have a library. You know, good business books and nothing out of the way."

Michael said that he thought a library was a fine thing.

"Business books and good adventure stories," elaborated Sam, sucking his teeth. "Either improve your mind or have a lot of fun. Do you ever read the *Literary Digest?"* asked Sam.

"Sometimes," said Michael. "There's good things in it."

"I'd like to have magazines like that, bound, you understand," explained Sam. "There's times when you want to look into back numbers. I'm a great reader, but I never forget nothing I read. I got a great mind for retaining facts. I was reading an article in *System* about a man who made a fortune out of just retaining facts. If I was a college president, I'd impress that one thing on the minds of my stu-

dents. Give 'em facts to build on. What you taking up in college?"

"I was thinking of journalism," said Michael shyly.

"Journalism?" asked Sam. "Do they teach that in college? Do journalists make good money? Journalism. It must be something new. All the journalists I ever knew was queer in the head. And to look at them you wouldn't think they had a dollar in the world. Well, go to it. I don't believe in meddling in a young man's affairs. Only, journalism." Sam sucked his teeth, thoughtfully. "Did you ever hear of colleges teaching journalism?" he asked Rachel.

"It's just a new thing. I thought it would be better for him to study medicine," said Rachel. "But if he's got his head set on journalism, there's no use trying to change him."

"Well, that's a funny thing to study in college," observed Sam. "What do you think you'll be, Michael? A reporter?"

"I was thinking of writing some day," said Michael, blushing. "Oh, maybe I won't be any good at it."

"You mean write stories?" asked Sam. "Do you hear that, Rachel? A writer in the family. Well, at least there'll be a little variety now. Everybody else sells socks and he wants to be a writer. And if there's money in it, I'd be the last person in the world to discourage him. They say this fellow, Rex Beach, has made a fortune. There was a story of his about Alaska. Say. If Michael can write stories as good as Rex Beach, there'll be nothing to worry about. Stories about Alaska and the gold rush up there. Yes, sir. Stories of adventure like that is just what people want. They like to imagine they're up there in Alaska, or maybe in the South Seas having one dickens of a time."

"Well, maybe I will write stories like that," said Michael after a pause. "I don't exactly know what I'll write about yet. I may want to write stories about society people."

"Well, sir," said Sam, "if I was to go up to an author, a man say like Rex Beach or maybe Henry Van Dyke, and

tell him the story of my life, I bet he could write a book about it. Yes, sir, the things I seen, and the places I worked would make a sure-enough book."

Michael looked unconvinced; but Rachel said, for that matter everybody in this world was a fit person for a book. Every time you took a walk and looked into people's faces you were seeing things that you might put into a book, not just adventure, but life moving along, slowly, and full of little dramatic details.

"Maybe so," said Sam. "I ain't arguing that point. I don't say that most people couldn't be put in a book. But what I mean is, would you get people to read the book? You got to know what the masses want. Authors like this here Rex Beach, they know just what the masses will read. They got it down to an exact science. It's like a business with them. They carry on a business the way I carry on my store. System. They probably have an elaborate filing system and all."

"I don't think I want to write about Alaska or the South Seas," said Michael. "I want to write about society people and artists."

"Well, there you are," affirmed Sam. "There's the whole thing in a nutshell. If you don't write what the masses want, how you going to live? How you going to get anywheres? It's all right for a genius to say he don't want to write for the masses. Say a man like Lew Wallace or this fellow who drank himself to death—what was his name—Poe? But look at people who were geniuses. Most of them starved to death and some of them took opium. Not everybody can be a genius."

"Just the same I'd like to write free and say what I want and not care just for the money in it," said Michael. "Or maybe just a little money so I could see Paris and London, and maybe China. If I want to make money I can stay in the clothing business."

"And you won't make a hell of a lot of money in the

clothing business, neither, if you got wild ideas," said Sam. "The man who makes a big success nowadays is the man with safe and sane ideas, a man who builds on bedrock. Look at John Wanamaker. I was just reading an article about him in *System*. He was careful, you understand, and he knew what he was doing. Those are the kind of men who make big successes, and not geniuses. Look at Marshall Field. All of them knew what the masses wanted. And if you want to go into the art side of it, look at this fellow, George M. Cohan. Look at the man who wrote *After the Ball*. Now if you could write a song like that, you'd be made."

"Yes, but that was music," argued Michael.

"But the words made the song, not the music," said Sam. "Why don't you try your luck at a song like that? That Wabash song, now. That was a pretty thing. De-da-de-de-da-dum. A song like that will make a fortune for a man.

"The *Poet and Peasant,* that's a pretty thing," murmured Rachel.

"But that's an overture," said Michael.

"It's a classic," said Sam. "I remember that when I was a boy in Minneapolis. It's a classic."

Rachel got up to put the children to bed, and Michael and Sam talked for a long time. But Sam was all down to the earth and talked in a very sensible way, and Michael was up in the sky. And Michael said that he wasn't sure, maybe he didn't know enough about society people to write about them. He didn't know exactly what he would write, except that it would be like music, singing along, something inside of him, words that sang and danced and raised their voices, and sometimes words that cried. And Sam sucked his teeth and said, "Things are changing from when I was a young man."

It was funny to see Rachel married to a man like Sam, because she was really a woman in the sky in the same way

that Michael was a boy in the sky. She would have lived with a man like Boris Romanovitch and gone traveling over the world seeing strange, unfathomable things in places like Korea and Moscow and Shanghai and Budapest. Or else she was a woman in a novel having strange experiences, and on every page she did a rash thing that she repented later. But it was as though Rachel had taken a drug of monotony into herself and the drug had permeated every vein of her body. Michael had a vague memory of her when she was married to Boris; and he remembered how she had flamed and danced a brilliant color in the Singermann family. She had been way up in the sky, then, but now she was yoked to Sam and they were plodding along the earth.

Yet for an hour, Rachel was her old self. It was on the day before Michael was to return to Silver Bow. The three of them—Michael, Rachel, and the little boy—had gone to pick flowers on the hills just to the north of the town. They had spent the whole morning gathering flowers, and by late afternoon they were tired and seated themselves on the wooden flume that was built halfway up the hill. The flume had been built to carry water from the Deer Lodge Reservoir to the Washoe Smelter some eight miles from the town, and they could hear the water rippling under them as it flowed along, mile after mile.

"How lovely it is up here," murmured Rachel, taking off her wide-brimmed straw hat and pushing the coal-black hair back from her forehead. "There's such a sweetness in the air, as if all the flowers were giving up their perfume before dying. It makes me feel like a little girl."

"It makes me feel like I was a little boy," said the child, leaning up against his mother.

Rachel and Michael laughed at this odd confidence. "I think," said Rachel, "that the best time of your life is when you're ten or eleven years old. Because then you're too old to be a burden and too young to be hurt by disappointments.

You wake up in the morning, and if it's a nice sunny day, you just run out and do any number of things and get good and tired. There's a kind of a golden wheel in the air that carries you around and around, and everything happens and nothing happens. By bedtime, you're so tired you fall right off to sleep; the wheel stops, but you don't know it. Everything is so perfect, somehow, a day and a night, a night and a day, a golden day, a rainy day, a white day. And always you're so very tired at night and drop right off to sleep."

"It's a kind of enchantment," said Michael.

"Sometimes, Uncle Michael, I dream at night," said the child. "But I never remember what I dreamed about. That's funny."

"When you get older," said Rachel, "you don't remember the sad and tragic things so much. But you remember those days of your childhood, golden wheels moving around slowly, and the sunshine dancing tiptoe on the spokes of the wheels. When you're older, you like to think back on those young days when you were around ten or maybe eleven, and it makes you happy in a way. The kind of happiness that has veins of sadness in it, like turquoise or quartz. If you could only go through life meeting things as they come and then forget them right off, like when you were ten or eleven."

"Turquoise is my birthstone," said the child. "But I don't like it. I don't like it as well as sapphires or rubies. I wish I was borned in a different month so's I wouldn't have turquoise. Turquoise. Porpoise. Lotta noise."

"It takes such a long time to forget things," said Rachel sadly. "There are some things you don't ever forget, and there are a lot of things you don't want to forget. Things like love and the first time you saw him. He was standing behind a plate-glass window."

"Who, mother?"

"A man I once knew."

"What was his name?"

"Boris."

"Boris," murmured the child. "Boris is a far-away name like in the desert." And the child took the name and smoothed it over with his tongue and lips and licked it. He snuggled the name close to his mother's breast. "Boris is a far-away name just so far away you can hardly see it, so far away."

"There's part of my blood that will never cool off," said Rachel. "There's part of my blood that's hot, that burns when anybody says his name. Two, three times a day I'll seem to burn up with fire when I think of him waiting for me, down the street, around the corner of some street. And part of my body burns, but nobody sees, and I'm just Mrs. Straller to those who look at me."

"I liked him, only I don't remember him very well," said Michael. "A tall, slim man who was tightly wired, somehow. A man bending over like a tightly strung bow. There seemed to be an arrow in him."

"Mother, will you get me a bow an' arrow for my birthday?"

"To hear me talk, you'd think my life was different from other people's," said Rachel. "But everybody has something like that happening. Everybody must lose the one they love and take another one."

"I think these things must happen to everyone," said Michael. "Unless a man is all an animal, he must love and lose and take another one. Life is so sad, I think sometimes. Life is so dreary. And then it fights you, and then you walk over it and feel fine. But nothing is the same for long. And one day you're in love, and the next day you're alone."

"Sometimes, life roars in your ears and it gives you nerves," marveled Rachel. "And then again it's so quiet you can

hardly hear a sound. Sometimes it's like thunder in your ears and sometimes it's like being in a low valley all still and quiet, with never a sound from early morning till late a night."

"Sometimes, I see it in colors," said Michael. "Some days are red with fight and blood, and other days are monotonous and gray; but certain days when you were a kid are all golden like you said, a great golden wheel going around slowly."

"I liked green days in summer with him sleeping near by under the trees. And there were blue evenings of twilight when supper was fixed and I waited for him to come home. But waking up in the dawn sometimes is blue, dim blue with the birds chirping, and with him lying beside you in the same bed."

"Life is sounds and colors," said Michael. "Loud and bold, and in-between, and soft and pale."

"But aren't we a duet, talking here on the hill all this time?" laughed Rachel. "Come, Michael. Look, the child is asleep. This sweet air makes you drowsy."

"Give him to me," said Michael. "I'll carry him down the hill."

"Pretty soon, you'll have one of your own," smiled Rachel. "They don't give you much time to think. There, you sleepy head. Go to your Uncle Michael. A lot you care that he's going as far east as Chicago."

They walked down the hill, Michael carrying the child, Rachel bearing the flowers. And that night when Sam began to talk of Michael's future, rushing his words, stopping to suck his teeth, Michael could not fit his mind to what his brother-in-law was saying, but his thoughts drifted off to the bowls of flowers everywhere about the house. His thoughts drifted off and remembered the flume on the hill and Rachel beside him with the child asleep against her breast.

Louis decided to open his own store in Bozeman, and he persuaded his brothers to buy him out. "It isn't that we don't get along," Louis said to Michael, "but I've had these ideas in my head all the time, and I want to run a woman's store. Before, when papa was alive, I had to listen to what he said, but now it's time I opened my own place and fixed things the way I want them."

Bozeman was a hundred miles east of Silver Bow and lay in the Gallatin Valley, rich in wheat and orchards. It was a town of nine thousand people, a quiet and sylvan town. Louis said that Michael should come and see him before he left for Chicago, and talk things over.

Every year, in late summer, Bozeman held a Sweet Pea Carnival, and there was a parade with floats, and in the evening, men and women walked up and down the streets and threw confetti at one another. Louis had opened his store a few days before the commencement of the carnival, and he was busy with his float, a horse and buggy decorated with sweet peas. He had found a pretty girl who worked in a beauty parlor to drive the buggy in the parade, and he was making a dress of sweet peas for her. Louis liked this sort of labor, decorating and making objects beautiful. He had Michael help him decorate the buggy, and they worked until late at night. Louis was immersed in his work, and as he covered the leather and wheels of the buggy with flowers, he talked all the time.

"What a carnival is for, is that people should forget all about themselves and run through the streets like children. Men should run up to women and grab them around the waists and kiss them. A carnival should be wild with love-making and confetti and flowers. Things like that appeal to me. But you can't get the farmers around here to get into the spirit of the thing. They walk up and down the streets like dummies, and they try and make believe they're having a good time. That's not what a carnival should be.

Everybody should get drunk, not whiskey drunk, but wine drunk, and they should twine flowers through their hair and dance. There," said Louis stepping off a few paces to survey the decorated buggy. "That's not so bad."

"It's cruel I couldn't study art when I was a kid," said Louis bending over one of the wheels and knitting the flowers more closely together. "But now I don't suppose I'll ever be able to get away and walk through the museums in New York and Chicago, and the Louvre in Paris and the Prado in Madrid. They say there are some old cathedrals over there. . . . God, just think of the stained glass of the old cathedrals! But you got the chance, Michael. Here I am tied down with a store now, and I never had the courage to set out for myself and travel up and down the world. That one time I broke away and got as far as Spokane, that sure . . . Jesus Christ! I had the dream, but I didn't have the guts. Imagination without courage, that ain't worth much. But you, I can see you got the courage to strike up for yourself and go up and down the world."

"Well, I don't know about that," said Michael shyly. "I can't say if I have the courage or if I haven't."

"Always I dreamed about being free from responsibilities and going up and down the world," said Louis, beginning to cover the shafts of the buggy with sweet peas. "And what do I do when I get enough money to go away? Why, I open a store; instead of which I ought to be on my way now. I ought to be on a ship crossing the ocean to foreign places. They say that India is a wonderful place to see, with the snake charmers squatting in the sun and the old priests scourging themselves for their sins. I suppose the island of Capri, now, is a sweet place and a rare rest to the eyes. And Venice with the dark canals and St. Mark's where you feed the pigeons. That must be a rare place to rest the eyes."

"Well, maybe you'll get your chance yet, Louis," said Michael. "There's a whole lifetime left to you."

"But it takes an adventurer to have adventures," pursued Louis. "I'm not the kind to be anywhere but here, working in my store. All I can do is dream, but I'm not the adventurous kind. I had my chance that time I went to Spokane, and I muffed it. Instead of fighting it out when I got into a pickle, I came running home. The courage wasn't there. I've got a mind that roams up and down the world, but my body won't follow." Louis was silent for a long time, working steadily at the decorations on the buggy. Then he said, "But I've got my own store now, and I'll be able to do a lot of things I always wanted to do. It'll be a lot different from waiting on miners in Silver Bow. Farmers' wives like nice things, a silk dress and a bit of lace. It'll be nice to run my fingers through silks and soft things, and fix my windows and paint my own store cards."

"It's what you always wanted to do," said Michael.

"Maybe it is," answered Louis. "Maybe it is. I don't know for sure just what I did want. That's the kind of a mind I've got. One day I'd want to have rooms high above the city, rooms filled with old furniture and soft rugs under my feet; and another time I'd want to be out in the country walking along a lonely road with the sun beating down on my bare feet. A beautiful girl means a lot to me. To look at a beautiful girl, to feel her near me, is a kind of blessing in my eyes. I can't say what I want, only to feel that some beauty is close by, that's a kind of blessing in my thoughts."

When Louis had finished with the buggy it was very late; but Louis's artistic hands had done wonders with an old leather and wood vehicle. He had transformed its ugliness into charm, he had woven a spell of flowers over scratched wood and dull leather. The two brothers left the store and walked along the street towards their hotel. The

night was soft, melodious in its freshness, and at times the scent of flowers weary with perfume was in the air. The inhabitants of Bozeman felt duty-bound to grow flowers in their front yards, and there were sweet peas everywhere, a trailing, fugitive sweetness in the night. As Louis walked along the street, dark and slim, his soft hat pulled low over his eyes, Michael had an impression of him that was highly romantic and curious. Louis was a young Italian troubadour on his way to woo a lady who lived high up beyond a balcony. He was not here in Bozeman at all, but far away in Verona, and he was about to scale a steep wall and drop lightly into the courtyard of a house where some Juliet lived in high virginity.

Out of the darkness before them appeared a girl, slim, but poorly dressed; and as she passed Louis, she looked at him from the corners of her eyes. She walked very slowly, and when Louis turned to look back at her, he caught her eyes again. "Say," and Louis nudged Michael, "I know that girl. She's a chambermaid at the hotel. She's got a shape. I'm going after her."

Louis overtook the chambermaid, and they started walking together towards the main part of town. Michael looked after them for a moment, then started for the hotel, thinking . . . and drop lightly into the courtyard of a house where some Juliet lived in high virginity. The thought had a pleasant rhythm on this night when the scent of sweet peas was blown through the streets of Bozeman. But Michael came to the end of the thought; the thought was like a flower that has long been pressed between the pages of a closed book; and when you hold the flower with your fingers, it falls to nothing.

The evening before Michael was to leave Silver Bow, he found his mother bent over an old trunk that she had brought from Roumania. She had a habit of saving nice

things, a linen tablecloth, a piece of lace, a silk waist and some ribbons. There would be a party or a wedding anniversary, and the guests would bring presents, a picture-frame, a pair of silk stockings, a silver buckle. Rebecca would look at them and see that they were too precious to use for every day. So she would put them in the trunk for some other time, some unprecedented time away in the future. A sapphire ring to gleam on your finger, a pair of long white gloves, a silk shawl to wear of cool summer evenings. All of them were in the trunk, and Rebecca was taking them out, one article after another, and handling them as though they were not for ordinary occasions, but for something very special, something unprecedented. When Michael came into the room he looked at these things in astonishment, for most of them he had never seen before, and some he had forgotten. They were all on the table, and Rebecca picked up each precious thing and gave it to Michael to look at and to feel. "A tablecloth like this is something fine for a big dinner," said Rebecca, and showed Michael how fine the fabric was, and how lovely the design. "For a Passover supper, maybe, or for a wedding, to have a tablecloth like this is to make a big spread for the guests. And a shawl like this one, so light and soft like a feather, to wear in the evening." But Rebecca did not put the shawl over her shoulders, but caressed it gently and held it up to the light and ran her fingers along its soft threads. "It was when you was born that Mrs. Bachmann brought me this shawl, and you could see by her face that she paid a big price for it." Then Rebecca held up the sapphire ring. "Papa, may he rest in peace, bought this from a customer who came to the store. A ring like this in a jewelry store would be an expensive ring, and only a rich man could buy it. But because the customer needed the money, he sold it to papa for a third-price." All these objects that Rebecca had lifted out of the trunk were fine things, not for every day, but for

very special occasions, like Passover supper, or a wedding, or maybe a dance once a year, but no more. This was the evening before Michael was to go away to college, and Rebecca wanted to show him that she had many fine things, too precious to show just anybody, and only for particular eyes, for Michael's eyes on the evening before he went away to college.

Then Rebecca bent over the trunk once more, and she was doing something inside the trunk with her hands, picking up things, little things, very old and very precious. A silver locket and a gold watch as big around as an onion, but delicate in its workmanship. Rebecca wiped the dust off the locket and turned it this way in the light and that way. She opened the locket and showed Michael what was inside. "A piece from my mother's hair," said Rebecca. And she gave Michael the locket to take with him to Chicago, but why, Michael did not know very well and could not understand exactly. "She had black hair," said Michael, and put the locket away in his pocket, but why his mother had given it to him was more than he could understand. Why didn't she give him a strand of her own hair, instead of her mother's whom he had never seen? "This watch," said Rebecca, and rubbed it over the back of her hand and made Michael see that it was guaranteed gold, "it don't run any more, and it would be better not to have it fixed, maybe you would spoil it. My father's watch," said Rebecca. "He always carried it in the bottom pocket of his vest, with a thick gold chain, but where the chain is now, I don't know. Maybe it is lost some place, in Roumania, in Minneapolis, moving from one house to the next. Or maybe somebody took the chain without even asking, can I have it. A fine thick chain like that to pass out of my hands, and maybe a stranger has it now, a man I do not know. You take the watch, Michael." But it was so heavy it weighed down Michael's pocket, and he could not say what good it would

be to him; and if it was meant for remembrance, it would not be any good, for he had never seen Rebecca's father. A large, old-fashioned watch like that, big around as an onion. And then Rebecca put all the other fine things back into the trunk, and closed the lid and locked it. "You got to be careful with strangers coming in and out," she said. "You can never tell when something will be missing, a ring, a shawl, a pair of silk stockings."

Rebecca did not go to the station with Michael the next day; but he kissed her good-by while a taxicab sputtered outside; and the noise of the motor made each kiss a farewell of quick, passing moments. A kiss that was long, but which beat with the noise of the cab outside, eager to be away. Rebecca's lips were soft to Michael's lips, and he thought how few times he had kissed her, because Singermanns did not do things like that. But her lips were soft and sweet, and Michael's sadness held his mother's beauty. Only at long intervals had he thought of her as a beautiful woman. She had been so close to him, and her features had been so familiar. And now that he might never touch her lips again, he was sad and thought long on her beauty, and how he had noticed it but rarely, through the years.

David and Sol and Harry accompanied Michael to the railroad station. They carried Michael's luggage into the station and inquired after the train for him, and told him the train was due in ten minutes. So Michael remembered how much David had sorrowed after Maxine, and now he would never see her again. He remembered the expression that came into David's eyes whenever Maxine appeared, and the way David's eyes would embrace Maxine's beauty, her golden hair, her eyes, her glowing figure. Maxine would come into the room, and David would catch her words to his lips and kiss her words and dream over them. But now there were only memories in David's eyes, and longing, and

a deep hunger. Michael wanted to take David in his arms and say something that would make him forget Maxine forever. She was a cruel woman, thought Michael. But that was the way she was made, and her cruelty threw off golden glints of beauty.

"I got a fight scheduled in two weeks," said Sol. "I'm going to box ten rounds with Jimmy McCready for the championship of the Northwest. You'll probably read about it in the paper."

"I'll look for it, Sol. You bet I'll look for it." There was a deep scar that ran from Sol's mouth to his chin, and his nose was flattened out of shape, and his ears were hideous.

"There's your train!" cried Harry. "Write me about the big city and about the lectures on psychology. There's a new thing every day. What about this Behaviorism, your body reacting to stimuli?"

"Where did you get that dope?" asked Michael. "I don't know what you're talking about."

"That's because you're a poet and a fool. And you won't know as much about psychology in twenty years as I know today. I ought to be the one going to college, not you. I'm the only one with brains in this family, and Sol is the only one who has any spunk. But he's such a blockhead."

"You shut your damn trap," said Sol. "The trouble with you is, you talk too much."

"Oh, get away, you gorilla."

"I'll sock you one in the eye."

The engine bell began to ring. "Take care of yourself, kid," called David.

"Don't let them put anything over on you," advised Sol. "Give 'em your dust!"

"Oh, God," sighed Harry as the train began to move, "I can hardly believe you're going away, beginning a new life. There's something very strange about it all. Sometimes, I'm beaten by it." Harry was running along with the train now.

"What did you say?" asked Michael, leaning out of the window.

"I said . . ." Michael did not catch the rest.

He watched Silver Bow disappear, the mines on the hill, the smelters, the dry, arid Flats. He picked up a book and began to read, but his mind could not hold the words. The words were on the page, sentence after sentence with meaning and beauty, but Michael could not gather them up and mirror them in his brain. He put the book aside and looked into the faces of the other passengers. Each face was interesting in its own particular way. Where had they come from and where were they going? What beauty did they hold within themselves, what tawdriness, what majesty, what romance?